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# THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CONTRAST.

“ For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ”

HEBREWS ix. 13, 14.

WE have seen in the first chapter of Leviticus, which we have this morning read, the letter of the Gospel. In the verses that we have now read, we have what may be called the spirit of the Gospel. The one is the outward and material hieroglyph, the other is the inward and the spiritual meaning. The one, or the letter, the worship on this mount, with all its forms, its ceremonies, its sacrifices ; the other is neither on this mount, nor on that, but the requirement that they who are in Christ worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The one was the washing with water, the purifying of the outward man ; the other is the washing of the spirit, the renewing of the inward heart. Leviticus, in the letter, could make a Jew outwardly ; the New Testament can



make a Jew inwardly, whose praise is not of man, but of God : but in both, as I have stated, we have the same Gospel. Moses and Matthew equally sketched from a grand original ; they equally described the Lord of glory, the Sacrifice for sin, the Saviour of the guilty, only in different shades and colours : in the case of Moses with more splendid colours, in more gorgeous hues ; in the case of Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, more fully, and simply, and transparently, but still the same Saviour. Moses and Matthew spoke the same truths ;—the one with stammering lips, the other clearly : the one upon the lower ; the other upon the loftier, and the clearer key-note. They lived in the same light ; but Moses saw Christ by moonlight,—a veil of dark cloud all round him and over him : the other saw Christ in the sunlight,—the clouds that are about him only softening, not concealing the splendour of his glory. But both looked to the same Saviour,—trusted in the same cross ; the one in the world's infancy, the other when light and immortality have been clearly brought to light. The fact is, there never has been, from the moment that Christ was preached in Paradise till now, but one Protestant and evangelical religion. It has been from the beginning. Adam, Abel, and Enoch, were Christians before the flood ; Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, were Christians, amid their shining tents in the desert ; Moses, and David, and Hezekiah, were Christians, amid the projected shadows of Sinai and of Horeb ; Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, and Peter and Paul, were Christians, who had seen Christ—the same Christ—face to face ; Augustine, and Chrysostom, and Vigilantius, were Christians in the patristic era, in the early dawn ; and Cecil and

Howell, and innumerable others, familiar to us personally, or familiar from their excellence and the life they have left behind them, are Christians now, upon whom the ends of the world have come. But salvation by grace, through faith in the only Sacrifice, ever was, now is, and always will be, the only mode of acceptance before God.

It may be asked by some, Why this progression in God's revealing of himself? Why did he not unfold at once, in Eden, the institution of his mercy and his love—the Gospel in all its fulness? It is one of the "why's" that a fool can ask, and the wisest man can scarcely answer: but, while we cannot solve it, we may in a manner vindicate it by asking, Why, if there be a God of goodness and of love, has he been pleased not to reveal earlier some of the most beneficent and useful discoveries of the age in which we now live? We can see progress in civilization, in literature, in science, in political knowledge. May not all this be to teach us, that progress in God's revealing of himself is only part and parcel of the great plan that he carries out in his own infinite wisdom, in his preparation of mankind for a better, a happier, and a nobler state? But we can see reasons in it that no one can possibly fail to admit the value of: we can see in this progress a constant teaching—a continuous impression. The human mind is less impressed by sudden light than by the gradual and persistent influence of a continuous one. Those truths that we search out for ourselves we recollect and feel more than those that are shortly and simply told us. It seems a law in our economy, that anything that we have been long drilled and initiated in, and made conversant with,

comes to be part and parcel of the influential principles that direct, and guide, and shape the whole life. Besides, we may not yet be able to answer these questions, because we do not see all God's ultimate designs. We see but a part of God's great economy; and it is very presumptuous in us to pronounce upon the whole, while we are admitted only to witness a part. When you read the preface of a book, you would not dream of pronouncing upon the merits of the whole from a perusal of the preface. When you see the foundation of a building, you would not think of pronouncing upon the excellence or the beauty of the edifice, either from a brick selected from the whole, or from seeing the foundation of it laid. And perhaps we may learn, in after ages, to feel some sense of shame that we cavilled where we ought to have had confidence; that we doubted where we ought to have been humble in our ignorance, and waited till the God that gave the mysteries was pleased to make them plain.

The Christian church never, from Paradise till now, was without a sacrifice to make, or a sacrament to receive. For four thousand years before Christ sacrifices were offered up day by day, in order to carry forward the hearts of the offerers to Christ, the only and the atoning Sacrifice. For two thousand years after sacraments have been celebrated in the Christian church, pointing the faith of the celebrants backward still to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. The sacrifices before Christ came, preached Christ to come; the sacraments since Christ came, preach Christ who has come: but the centre and the object of both was Christ, and both destitute of in-

herent virtue, and precious only as preaching simply Him who is all our salvation and all our desire.

Faith in Christ, as the only atonement, was equally requisite in him who brought his victim of old, and in him who now does this in remembrance of him. It was not the sacrifices that Moses offered that saved Moses; but the one Great Sacrifice to come, in whom Moses believed. It is not the sacrament that we celebrate, that either regenerates us or justifies us; but the Christ who appointed those sacraments in order to commemorate him. It was not the offering of his lamb that saved Moses, but faith in Christ, the Lamb of God. It is not coming to the Lord's Supper that does of itself any good to us, but faith in him who appointed that institution, rite, and sacrament, in order to commemorate him. We see that whether it was under Levi or under Matthew, whether it was in the economy that has passed away or in the economy that still is, it was still personal communion with God, the exercise of personal faith in Christ that saved the sinner, and not the sacrifice he offered, or the sacrament he celebrates, or the rite, however beautiful, in which he engages. Thus, personal apprehension, or trust—not ecclesiastical, not corporate, but personal trust—with the heart and conscience in Christ, the Saviour of sinners, ever was, now is, and ever will be, salvation to the chiefest of sinners.

Let us now ask, Who appointed these sacrifices? You must have noticed to-day, as we read the chapter, that they were not first instituted in Leviticus, but regulated there. God does not there appoint the sacrifices, but he assumes the offering of the sacrifices as a habit that always had been. Just as in the desert, the

## THE CONTRAST.

Sabbath was not then instituted; their memories were simply refreshed by the recapitulation of it. So these sacrifices were not instituted by Moses in Leviticus, but they were regulated and made subservient to the great purpose for which God designed them. What is the origin of sacrifices—whence did they originate? It is not, I think, possible, that if man had been left to himself, he could have for a moment supposed that the sanguinary and bloody rites in the Tabernacle, making its courts almost like slaughter-houses, without any great lesson that it inculcated, could have been acceptable to God. Man's finest feelings would revolt from taking away the life of an innocent and inoffensive lamb, incapable of injury, and by its very nature unstained by any sin. It is impossible to believe that he could take, of his own spontaneous choice, such an animal, and suppose that his shedding its blood, burning it upon an altar, and letting it ascend in smoke and flame to God,—that this destruction of a part of God's most beautiful workmanship, could by any possibility atone for a moral transgression, committed by him who should slay the animal and offer it up to God. It does seem that man, as man is, if left to himself, would have selected the fairest and the most fragrant flowers, least blighted by the taint of sin, that grew in the lingering sunshine, and under the shelter of the walls of Paradise, and have woven them into a beautiful garland, and laid them upon the altar of God, and have asked God to accept these as the offerings of his heart. But we are not left to guess. Cain, from the instincts of his nature, did so, and he was rejected: Abel offered an offering of a totally different description, and was accepted. We

have, therefore, positive proof that sacrifices were not of human but of divine origin. We find man, after his sin, and before he was taught the gospel, conscious that there was in him some great want, some terrible change; and dreaming in his ignorance that the fever that he felt without was all, and not the sin that touched the conscience within, took fig-tree leaves, made himself a beautiful raiment from one of the trees of the garden, and thought that thus he could right himself, and would be beautiful before God as he was in the days of his pristine innocence. But God did not suffer this; he clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of slain animals. For what purpose were these animals slain? We find that animal food was not allowed till the days of Noah; for two thousand years flesh was not eaten as part of the food of man. It is therefore certain that the skins with which Adam and Eve were clothed were the skins of animals slain in sacrifice. The instant Adam sinned, that instant the want of the Great Sacrifice was felt in Paradise. Cain offers up beautiful flowers and delicious fruits, as expressive of his allegiance to God, and the fruits and the flowers are blasted, and the offerer is branded: Abel takes of the firstlings of his flock, offers up a lamb, sheds its blood; the offering is accepted, and the offerer is praised. We have, therefore, express divine sanction, that sacrifices were of divine origin. Job offered up a whole burnt-offering in case sin should cleave to his sons; Abraham, wherever he struck his tent, there had his altar built; and we find, in the Levitical economy, sacrifices expressly authorized, commanded, and approved by God. We are thus certain that sacrifices are of divine origin. Where

too did the most barbarous tribes in the backwoods and deserts of the world get the sacrifices that they offer? I am satisfied it is the remains of tradition. Tradition has wafted on its wings certain primal and aboriginal truths; and the most distant tribes prove, by their practice, their origin to have been where Ararat stood; and the remains of the religion that they practise to be distorted fragments of the revelation of God himself.

If these sacrifices were of Divine origin, what was their object—why were they instituted? Was it a mere arbitrary selection, or was there special fitness in the sacrifices for the special purpose that God had in view? What was their object—what their end? We can answer some of these questions from that infallible commentary upon Leviticus—the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. No sacrifices offered by Aaron and his sons were ever regarded as substitutes, for, or as superseding, moral duties and obligations. The same God that appointed the sacrifices to lead to the knowledge of forgiveness, appointed the Decalogue, and forbade its violation. It is not true, therefore, that the atonement offered in the Tabernacle or the Temple superseded the moral obligation of compliance with God's holy law. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No! "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of

thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" No sacrifices that man could offer could ever be a substitution for that.

These Jewish sacrifices did not atone of themselves. There was no more expiatory virtue in the Levitical sacrifice of a lamb than there is in the sacraments that we celebrate. There is no proportion between them. How can we suppose that the blood of a dumb brute can possibly cancel the transgressions of a responsible and immortal soul? There is no proportion between them; and to suppose that any Israelite had his sins forgiven, really and fully, through the blood of the sacrifice he offered, is to misunderstand the whole of the Levitical economy; for, says the apostle himself, if these sacrifices could have taken away sin, they would have ceased to be offered; because the worshipper, once pardoned, would have had no more consciousness of sin. But the fact that they were constantly offered, shows that they could not take away sin; because if they had taken away sin they would have ceased to be offered, as having done their work, and nothing more being left for them to do. But the very fact that they were ceaselessly and continuously offered proves that they could not take away sin. Hence David, when he rose to the highest pitch of evangelical experience, and writing after his sin, in Psalm li., says, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering." Now, if these had been atoning, or expiatory, they would have been the very things that God would have delighted in, that God would have desired, and that David would really need. But David looked beyond these, and saw Him who was the



Antitype, the object, and the end of these; and he, therefore, prayed that God would hide his face from his sins, and blot out all his iniquities. I admit there were subordinate ends in all these sacrifices; but, beyond all these, and beyond all doubt, the great end of all Leviticus—its pervading aim, its object, its meaning—was, to teach Christianity, which is one word for Christ crucified. What is Christ crucified? Christianity. What is Christianity? Just Christ crucified. The lustre of the victims of Levi was borrowed from the Cross: their significance, their interpretation, is found in the Cross of Christ. Christ was not adapted to them, as the popular mind often supposes, but they were pre-adapted to set forth Christ. He was the archetypal victim—they were shadows only to signify Him. The proof of this is plain. These sacrifices began in Paradise the moment that Christ was declared; and they ceased on Calvary the moment that Christ died. They were buried with Christ in his grave—only Christ rose, and all the sacrifices of Levi remain behind.

How conclusive is the evidence in all this that these sacrifices were not atonements, nor expiations—but voices crying in the wilderness, “We are not that Lamb; we are only here to help you to see that Lamb; and to lean, not upon us, that cannot save you; but upon the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.” And justly do we conclude, that if anything besides this were the object of the Levitical economy, it would be altogether unworthy of God. If there be not meaning and mystery wrapt up in these strange hieroglyphs, with their meaning *and* mystery explained in Christ and in the New

Testament, I never could suppose that the God that gave that magnificent and sublime expression of his will on Sinai—the Decalogue—ever could have descended to tell you how to kill sheep, to shed their blood, upon what side of the altar they should be slain, and what robes the priest should wear when he slew them. The contrast between the two is so great that you cannot suppose that the God who gave the Decalogue inspired Leviticus, if Leviticus be an ultimate and a closing thing. The fact is,—regard Leviticus as an ultimate ritual, its prescriptions as stereotypes, and I could not accept it as inspired: but rend the veil; let the light of the New Testament fall upon the Old; let the glory that shone on Mount Tabor in the transfiguration light upon Moses, as he treads the desert, and builds the Tabernacle, and names the sacrifices,—and I can see in every sacrifice the footprint of Christ, in every utterance the Gospel of Christ, and in all Christ crucified—which is, Christianity. No one, therefore, should read the Old Testament without the New, nor the New without the Old. Read commentaries and explanations of both, by all means; but read Leviticus, especially, in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I do not know what we should have done without that magnificent commentary upon Leviticus—the Epistle to the Hebrews: it is the key to it, it explains it, and puts it in its true light, and shows its significance and its meaning most strikingly and beautifully.

Having reached these conclusions, let me notice that these Levitical sacrifices were always regarded as fit for food. And I may mention, that while there was mainly and chiefly great spiritual ends, you will find

in Leviticus laws for food, for clothing, and for social life, that we, of this nineteenth century, are only beginning at this moment to learn. Why, what do you find amongst the Jews now? They are not certainly the cleanest or the most particular people in their habits; and yet, because they ritually observe certain laws, you find them generally exempt from pestilence; by their law they are obliged at certain times to clean their house, and to clean it thoroughly—not only those parts which are seen, but every nook and corner of it. And what is the consequence? That the Jews, by the use of those means that God in his providence has provided, are generally exempt from those fevers, and pestilences, and other diseases, to which Gentiles are more subject. And there are in the Old Testament, in addition to its great moral laws, certain regulations for social life and instructions with reference to it, that make this nineteenth century in which we live look savage and barbarous, in comparison of the habits of these uninstructed, illiterate, and unæsthetic Jews, living nearly two thousand years before Christ came into the world.

These animals that were offered in sacrifice were always fit for human food. This law is not, I believe, morally binding now; the animal that re-chewed its food, and whose hoof was divided into two parts, was alone fit for human food to a Jew, and also for sacrifice on his altar. For instance, the pig was not allowed to be eaten by the Jew—it was accounted unclean. So, in the same manner, the dog, the horse, with the wild beasts—necessarily unclean—were not allowed to be eaten by the Jews. And you will find, now, that your health is very much connected

with the observance of these great laws; and, it may turn out, on riper investigation, that these laws, while they seemed to have reference only to religious rites, were connected with the social and physical well-being of the race of which we form a part. The animals chosen for sacrifice were strictly to be what were called "clean animals." This was intended to indicate that as the Jew could only eat the clean animals, so it was only the clean animals that were offered in sacrifice. Perhaps it meant, too, that just as what we eat is incorporated into our frame, and becomes part and parcel of our bodies, so the Jew's interest in his sacrifices should be something closer than sight,—something more intimate than mere presence. It should be true of him and of us, "We live; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us." "My flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed,"—that is, we should be so completely his that we are members of his body—our happiness, our peace, our strength, our prospects, not ours, but Christ's; and ours because Christ's, and received through him.

In the second place, the sacrifices were required to be very valuable. If a man was very rich, according to his wealth he was to give his offering; if he was poor, he was to give that which he could afford;—and the poor woman that brought her turtle doves as a sacrifice, was as acceptable in the sight of God, as the rich man that brought his ox. But the rich man was not to say, Therefore I will bring pigeons as a sacrifice; but each, according to his ability, was to offer that which became him. And in these sacrifices, too, there may have been certain types and symbols

that were no doubt of value. The patient ox, the meek lamb, the gentle dove, may have been prefigurations of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the great idea that they inculcated—line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, there a little—was the idea of atonement. The great truth with which the Jew was indoctrinated in all his sacrifices, was this—that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. The great idea that God designed to impress upon the minds of the offerers, was this—that pardon of sin and sacrifice were in some shape inseparable, and that without a victim's death there never could be the sinner's forgiveness. Now, a great thought impressed upon a people, and constantly elucidated, ends in great acts. You very rarely find that a truth introduced into the human mind is altogether without fruit in the human life; and, in order fully to develop and render clear this idea, you will observe that the priest laid his hand upon the victim's head, and confessed the sins of the people. Thus, every Jew was taught the idea of transference of sin—transferring the similitude of his sin to the creature slain, and his going free because that creature was slain. The idea of a sin-bearer, as well as a sin-sacrifice, was thus made constantly familiar to the Jew. And then the lesson still lasts for us. How beautifully does that express what has been done by Christ! The Jew came, laid his hand upon the head of the victim, and confessed his sins over it; the victim was slain, utterly consumed before God. The Christian lays not his literal hand upon a literal victim, but he lays the trust of his soul upon an unseen, but not an unknown, Christ; and *thus* reposing the hand of his heart, the confidence of

his soul, upon Him on whom were laid the iniquities of us all, for his name's sake we are justified, acquitted, and accepted of God. And hence, whenever the apostles designed to teach that great truth which the Socinian so ignorantly denies—that Christ's death was an atonement, they could not have used language that more distinctly or emphatically describes it. I say, if you want to teach it, I defy you to employ language that more clearly, distinctly, and emphatically inculcates the expiatory character of Christ's death than that which the apostles employ. And when they did so, the Jews, accustomed for four thousand years to sacrificial rites, and the Gentiles, still retaining, from tradition, some distorted remains of primeval sacrifice, were both prepared to understand them. And thus Christ, regarded as an atonement, was not the objectionable thought to the Gentile. There is no evidence that the Gentiles objected strongly to the idea of Christ's death being atoning; what they could not believe was that he had risen from the dead;—and the Jews had no doubt of the meaning of Christ's death being atoning; their only doubt was, whether Christ was the Messiah promised to the fathers. But the apostle argues with great force in this chapter on the superiority of Christ's sacrifice to all these; for, he argues, with unconquerable logic,—If these, the sacrifices of Levi, “sanctified,”—that is, made outwardly clean, “to the purifying of the flesh;” that is, translated into Levitical language, if the Jew was ceremonially clean, admissible into his temple, entitled to a place in his nation, having a right to all the privileges that belonged to the Jew in the literal Canaan—how much more will the Christian, the true

Jew, be admitted to all the privileges of the Christian economy, and to the everlasting Canaan, the true rest that remains for all the people of God! The Levitical sacrifices gave outward cleanness, outward rights, outward privileges, outward hopes; Christ's sacrifice gives inward character, inward peace, inward joy, inward hope; and, if these outward sacrifices gave all these national privileges to that people, how much more shall the sacrifice of Christ give pardon, peace, joy, to all mankind, that are taught by his blessed Spirit to rest on him, and to accept his sacrifice as their only title to heaven!

There is something in this most comprehensive—the “How much more!” is inexhaustible in its meaning. If the Jew got so much by his sacrifices, what language shall express, what words shall paint, the blessings that shall flow to the worst of sinners through faith in the death and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The apostle says, “Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God.” You have here proof of the doctrine of the Trinity—Christ, the offerer; the Spirit, through whom he offered; and God the Father, to whom he offered. And thus, when we are baptized, we are baptized in the name of Christ, that offered the sacrifice; in the name of the Spirit, through whom he offered it; and in the name of the Father, to whom he offered it. And when we are blessed, sacrifice is still interwoven with it. We are blessed in the name of the Father, to whom he offered it; in the name of Christ, by whom the offering was made; and in the name of the Spirit, through whom the offering was *made*. There is found in the baptismal name, there

is found in the daily blessing, the idea of sacrifice and sin forgiveness. It runs through the whole Christian economy ; giving it all its colouring, its shape, its light, and its life.

Christ himself was the priest. He, it is said, offered for us. And what a blessed thought it is that we need no priests in the Christian economy now, because there is nothing for them to do. Christ offered himself—an Infinite Offerer, presenting an infinite sacrifice : if not sufficient, nothing can be ; and if sufficient, what is the use of priests ? Mark the distinction : Christian ministers are called ambassadors, but never priests officially. Now what is the difference between the two ? A priest is a man that holds a position before God ; an ambassador that puts God's will clearly and plainly before us. The priest ascends from the sinner to God, making reconciliation ; the ambassador comes from God down to the sinner, proclaiming reconciliation. Therefore, to admit a Christian minister to be a sacrificing priest, is simply to be guilty of utter apostasy from all that is distinctive of and peculiar to that religion where we have not a sacrifice to make us priests between man and God ; but a sacrifice to proclaim from God—God reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to men their trespasses.

And as Christ was the Priest, so we read, in the next place, he was the Sacrifice. All the sacrifices then perished. His words, "It is finished !" rung the death-knell of them all. Aaron, and Levi, and Moses, and all the priests of the Tabernacle, stood around Calvary when Christ died, and when he said, "It is finished !" they added, "Amen ! Our work is



done; the Great Workman is here; our sacrifices are finished, the True Sacrifice has come. There is nothing more for us to do; the transient is merged in the eternal, the provisional is merged in the perfect; Christ is come; and he hath offered one sacrifice for sin, once for all. No other is possible; no other is needed. Instead of thinking of others, let us rest more intensely upon this once for all, for the sins of all that believe."

And what a truth is here! Deity, the altar; Jesus—God-man—the priest; his humanity, the victim. The altar was not the cross, but the Godhead; the priest was not man, but Christ himself: and the victim was his own spotless self, without spot, without blemish,—his own holy and perfect humanity. What a grand truth is this, my dear friends; how instructive to us, that our religion is built upon that in which a Triune Jehovah was concerned; and if we rest here, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He offered himself by the Spirit. You will find from Christ's conception to the close of his life constant allusions to the Spirit taking a part; but the very fact that He offered himself—no man living can offer himself a sacrifice; no man living has a right to do it; he may commit suicide, or he may commit murder, but he cannot offer himself,—the fact that Jesus offered himself, is the best possible evidence that Jesus was God.

The great truth which the apostle draws from this is, that he might "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The great truth is, that the very first effect of the atonement is *to be* the extinction of that which is the fever of

the conscience—remorse ; and the introduction of that which is the healing of the conscience—the peace which passeth understanding ; the purifying of the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Insensibility may exist in men who, by constant excitement of the world, keep down thought ; but wherever there is a thinking man, with the knowledge of the New Testament and the Saviour, there must be, at the recollection of sin, remorse. And there is no feeling, I believe, so terrible as remorse. I can conceive no agony more terrible than that. The poet, though not a Christian, describes it when he says,

“ The man that broods o’er sinful deeds  
Is like a scorpion girt with fire,  
In circles narrowing as it glows,  
The flames around the captive close ;  
So does the guilty soul expire,  
Like to the scorpion girt with fire.  
So writhes the mind remorse has riven  
Unfit for earth, undoom’d to heaven ;  
Darkness above, despair beneath,  
Around it flame, within it death.”

Such is remorse in its intensest form ; and everyone has some knowledge what it is, though he never has had any experience of its terrible intensity. Then how is the conscience purged from this ? If I address a sinner in this assembly, who has the feeling of remorse at the recollection of sin, how does this atonement take it away ? Not by destroying conscience. Peter’s conscience was more sensitive after forgiveness than it was before. Not, in the second place, by destroying the recollection of sin. You cannot forget a sin ; if done, it cannot be cancelled, and ever after

you must recollect it. In heaven they may recollect sin on earth ; and praise Him only the more who graciously forgave it. It is not, in the next place, by showing sin itself in a different aspect to man after he is converted. Then how is it ? Not by your forgetting sin ; not by the conscience becoming dead to sin ; not by sin itself being changed in its essential character ; but by this—that you see in that Atonement in which you trust that everything that sin did is completely destroyed, that every ruin that sin made is rebuilt. Was the law broken ? The atonement has magnified it. Was God dishonoured ? Through Christ he is glorified. Are you separated from God ? By the atonement you are united to him. Are you strangers and aliens by nature ? By this atonement you are brought near to him. And your own minds can see that the process of redemption so completely covers the wreck or havoc that sin has made, that you repose in perfect confidence upon it ; and the peace that passeth understanding becomes your possession ; so that justified by faith we have peace with God—not because we forget sin, not because sin is not sin, not because conscience is dead, but because we lay our hands upon the head of the spotless Lamb, and are sure—sure as we are that we do so—that all the curse, the condemnation, the misery of sin, is put away, and so there is sunshine for cloud, and peace for trouble, and hope where there was none before.

## CHAPTER II.

### CONFESSION THROUGH SACRIFICE.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN i. 8, 9.

You will see at once the allusion of the text to some of those rites about which we have been reading in the fifth chapter of the Book of Leviticus. I stated, at the close of my short exposition of the chapter, that confession seems always to have accompanied the sacrificial offerings of the Jews; confession referring to sacrifice, the sacrifice giving to that confession all its virtue and vitality. We shall find instances scattered throughout the whole Scripture of what confession is—how full, how free, how truly the expression of the inmost sentiments of the heart—not only in the New, but in the Old Testament also. We have a very beautiful definition of it in these words, in 1 Kings viii. 47: "Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their

soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee." We have an instance of it equally beautiful in the prophet Daniel, where we read that Daniel confessed in some such terms as these:—"I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession,"—confession always suggestive of sacrifice to a Jew's mind, and never detached or dissociated from it,—“and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass, that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." You

have, therefore, in the first prescription from the Book of Kings, what is to be the nature of the confession; and, in this instance, of prayer by Daniel himself, a specimen of true, fervid supplication and confession at the footstool of the Almighty. In the Psalms of David, every psalm alternates confession, forgiveness, and thanksgiving.

Let us inquire and try to ascertain what are some of the characteristics of true confession of sin. He that has never confessed his sins to God knows nothing of what the very first requirement or instinctive suggestion of Christianity is. If we have never confessed to God when no ear could hear but his, we have never yet sought truly, earnestly, and fervently, the forgiveness of our sins; and if we have never sought it, we have it not; and if we have it not, it is not because we are poor, or ignorant, or unable, but wholly because we are unwilling humbly to confess our sins, and to seek mercy and forgiveness from God.

Now, as far as I can judge from all instances of confession recorded in the Word of God, we shall find that wherever there was genuine confession of sin, whether it was personal and private, or congregational and public, it was always freely felt and freely expressed. It was not something wrung from the party confessing as a sort of sacrifice, or a sort of ordinance; but it was the free, the full, the spontaneous pouring out of the inmost and deepest compunctions of the soul in earnest prayer and communion with God. Pharaoh, when he felt the judgments of God upon him, confessed his sins only to return to his sins again. When Balaam, the wicked

and the false prophet, saw the angel, he confessed his sin, but it was not true confession. Judas, when he flung away the price of blood, confessed his sin—"I have betrayed innocent blood!" But these criminals confessed their sins just in some such way as sailors in a storm fling their cargo overboard, their hearts almost going after it—obliged to do it in the hope of saving the ship, but willing rather to retain it if they could save their lives while they did so. Pharaoh, and Judas, and Balaam, were ready to get rid of the sins that were conducting down upon their heads the judgments of God, not that they liked the sins less, but that they feared the judgments which those sins were precipitating upon them. This is not true, or Christian, confession of sin.

Wherever there is true confession, it will be full. It will not be the confession of the sin that lies heaviest on the conscience only, nor confession of the sins last recollected; but the confession of all sin. It will be taking all the shame and the guilt of sin to yourself. Till Adam became a Christian, his confession was not Christian confession. When his sin was brought to his conscience first, he said, "The woman that thou gavest me, she gave me, and I did eat." He distributed the blame between God and Eve; and, as for himself, he was as innocent as a lamb. "The woman that thou gavest me,"—why did you give her to me? "The *woman* that thou gavest to me, she gave me, and I did eat." And then Eve, showing how human nature had suddenly become depraved, when she was spoken to said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat;" but, as for me, I am *perfectly innocent*. Why did you make the serpent?

Why did you suffer him to come here? There can be no guilt in me; I am thus perfectly innocent. But when they were brought to see themselves in the right light, and to see the woman's seed that should bruise the serpent's head, they learned with Abel, their second son, to confess their sins freely, as well as fully, and to seek forgiveness only through the blood of sprinkling. So Judas, when he confessed, confessed the sin that was last perpetrated, and the worst—his betrayal of innocent blood; but he did not confess the previous covetousness that led to it. A Christian's confession of his sins to God is full; he not only confesses outward acts, but inward feelings. And that man who, when God alone hears, can unveil to God sins that nobody else can see, and shortcomings that nobody else dreams of, and seeks forgiveness for those sins that are hidden from the world, as well as for those that the world takes cognizance of—the man, in short, who can say from his very heart, "O God, cleanse me from secret sins!" gives the strongest evidence that his confession is accompanied with forgiveness from the only Atonement from which forgiveness comes.

In the next place, true confession of sins, such as is indicated here, must be not only free, not only full, but sincere and unfeigned. You may repeat the most beautiful liturgy that ever was composed, and yet not confess one single sin. You may use words the most expressive of true contrition, and yet there may not be the faintest contrition in your heart. Your lips may be most eloquent, your heart may be wholly dumb. Now God does not listen to what a man says, but to what a man's heart beats. God



regards not outward devotion only, but the heart, whether it be devotional or not. Many a person prays who does not say many prayers; and many a person says many prayers who never prays at all. What God looks to, therefore, as the organ of true confession is, the heart,—without the voice if you like, but never the voice without the heart. Both, if you can; but if one must be absent, let it be the voice, not the heart.

Confession must be to God, and to God alone. Fallen and degraded as man is, he degrades himself below the pitch to which sin has brought him, when he kneels down before a priest, so called, and confesses in his ear the secret thoughts, and imaginations, and sins of his heart. That is deep and thorough degradation. God never degrades the sinner, though He will always humble him: but such confession as that is not humbling, it is degradation. And I may here, without entering into controversy, just notice the text, very often quoted for it:—"Confess your faults one to another." There is a note in the Roman Catholic Bible below this text, which says, "Confess your faults one to another,"—that is, "Confess your sins to the priests." That is a very extraordinary inference,—“Confess your sins one to another—that is, confess your sins to the priests!” And very justly did a poor Irish convert, under that noble movement—the Irish Church Missions, say, “Here is the advantage of notes to our Catholic Bible; for how should we have found out that we ought to confess to the priest, if it had not been for this note below the text in St. James,—‘Confess your *sins* one to another; that is, to the priests?’ We

never could have discovered it except for that 'note.'” But that note is not the interpretation of the text, but the obscuration and distorting of the text. The text is, “Confess your faults one to another;” and as to the whole system of confession based upon it, there is here its utter disproof. “Is any sick among you?” What is he to do? Let him call for the priests of the church? No! no such officer is known in the Bible; but let him call for the “elders” of the church; and then, when he calls for them, what are they to do? Hear his confession and absolve him? No! nothing of the kind—let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him. Nothing is here about absolution. And then, if he hath committed sins, not the elders of the church shall forgive them; but they, the sins, shall be forgiven him. And then, confess your faults, not to a priest, but confess your faults “one to another.” If I have said a word to you that has given you offence, it is my duty to confess it, and your duty to forgive it; and if you have said a word against me, it is your duty to confess, and my privilege to forgive. But here is a distinction which I wish you to notice. A sin has two aspects. If I should steal a sovereign from a fellow-sinner, my friend, that act would have two aspects; one aspect would be the injury it does to my brother—the other aspect would be the sin in its rebound that I commit against God. Now, as far as it is injury done to my brother, he ought to forgive it, and he can forgive it, and do it better than the priest can, because the priest has nothing to do with it; it was not committed against him, but against my brother: but, as far as it is sin committed against God, and only

against him, God alone can forgive it, and to God alone, therefore, I confess it. The fault—the injury—that I have committed against another, that other forgives; but the sin that is in it, which shoots from the earth and strikes against heaven, God, against whom it is committed, alone can forgive. Hence David said—what we sung or prayed this morning—“Against thee, thee only have I sinned,”—that means, I have injured Uriah, but I have sinned against thee. Therefore he seeks forgiveness, not from the priest, but from God—“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

Let me allude to another characteristic of all true and genuine confession. All confession of sin is specific. While there is a general confession fitted for the general congregation, there is the specific confession, peculiar to individuals. Hence, in some of the most memorable instances in the Old Testament, we find the specific sin added to the general. Thus in Judges x. 10, “we have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim”—the specific sin added. So the Israelites confessed that “we have committed sin; we have added unto our sins this,” namely, “that we have asked us a king.” Added to their general confession was the specific sin that lay the heaviest upon the nation’s conscience, or upon the individual’s heart. We may notice, too, that where there is real, specific confession of sin, there is always aggravation, rather than diminution, of the sins that are confessed. Whenever the man who is not enlightened, nor thoroughly

in earnest, confesses his sins, there is always the echo of an apology; he always admits extenuating circumstances. But wherever you find in God's Word true confession of sin, you find it always in the language rather of aggravation than otherwise. For instance, the Apostle Paul, after he was converted, confesses his sin thus, in Acts xxvi.: "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities;" every word and epithet implying the unnecessary cruelty he practised, and the aggravated nature of the transgressions which he here commemorates. So did Peter. In the touching incident where our Lord looked upon him, and Peter went out and wept bitterly, it is added, "When he thought thereon;" it is in our translation in Mark xiv., "he thought thereon;" but it means literally, "When he cast up all in his mind;" when he recollected how he was chosen from being a fisherman to be an apostle; how miracles had fed him; how mercies had accompanied him; how Jesus had honoured him as a bosom friend; how he had delivered him from every danger and from every difficulty, and instructed him in ignorance;—when he cast up all these things in his mind, and then felt that he had denied such a Benefactor, he went out and wept bitterly.

We thus see, that wherever there is true confession,

there will be, not the diminution or extenuation of the offence, but the full, candid, and specific admission of it.

There will be, in the next place, true sorrow. It is said that David watered his couch with his tears; and every tear in David's case had a tongue. God "heard his weeping." And the sorrow that is often deepest is least seen. "When thou fastest, thou art not to appear to men to fast." The sorrow that is deepest rarely finds outward expression; and often there is the keenest where there is the least evidence of it before men. But wherever there is genuine confession, there must be grief; the more real, as we are dealing in confession—what, indeed, is essential to do—not with a judge, not with a tyrant-ruler, but with God our Father. Hence confession of sin is never that of a criminal confessing to a judge, but of a son confessing to his father. Accordingly, in those confessions that we find in the Bible, there is always this filial character. Daniel says, "To the Lord *our* God,"—not "to the Lord God;" but to the Lord *our* God—filial trust. And again, the prodigal said, "I will arise and go to *my* father." He had asked from his master bread, and he gave him the husks that the swine did eat. He then says, "I will arise, and go to my father." Even in his estrangement from home, that beautiful relationship had neither been merged nor forgotten. "We have an Advocate," not with a judge, but an "Advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Thus, then, terror must not blind the eye to the sight and apprehension of a Father; nor must our *recollections* of God's justice, God's character as the

Creator and Governor of the universe, ever cause us to lose sight of this—that God is our Father, and that we are his children ; and you will find that the sense of the relationship “Father,” will make the sorrow deepest, the compunction tenderest, the confession truest, fullest, and most real.

Wherever there is true confession, of the kind I have mentioned, there will be, in as far as our conduct to man is concerned, reformation ; in as far as our relationship to God is concerned, reparation. Those things which we have done which we believe to be wrong, it will be our study, our effort, to correct. The more we know of each other, the more we see remains to be forgiven ; the less we know, the more we exact ; but he that knows his own nature best will be most compassionate to the sins, most forgiving to the faults and iniquities, of others. But, in reference to God, what reparation can we make ? If we have misused our youth, we cannot recall its morning beauty ; if we have abused our manhood, we cannot bring back the sun from the western horizon to his noon, and live our life again. Then, what is to be done ? All that we can do is, in the language of the apostle, to seek for full forgiveness for the past through the blood of sprinkling, which is ever offered, and to redeem the time—that is, to put into the remaining years of our life intenser usefulness to man, intenser devotedness to God. Wherever there is genuine confession of sin, there will be, not, indeed, anything offered to God as a propitiation, or anything pledged to God as an atonement. The past never can be recalled ; its deeds cannot be undone. I think it is one of the most solemn thoughts in the world, that an act

once done may be forgiven, or forgotten, but it cannot be annihilated—that is impossible. A thought once felt may be forgiven, or forgotten, but it cannot be annihilated.

The future, from this very day, is open; the years are yet unpledged to sin, folly, and wickedness. Well, if there be earnest supplication for forgiveness for the past, the best evidence that that supplication has been sincere, that the confession has been true, will be that we shall throw greater energy into the years that remain, do more good while we live, and be more devoted to Him who has pardoned the past, and given us grace to make better use of the future.

Having seen what confession is, let me notice, what follows so very beautifully, and what is so encouraging to those who look back upon a past misspent—and no past of any life in this assembly has been spent as it should be, though some pasts may be blacker and more stained than others; but the future is before us, the past is gone from us—we are assured that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now let me show how very remarkable this language is. Just in these very words we have opened out the distinctive glory and excellence of real evangelical Christianity—that God is faithful and just to forgive. We can easily understand, “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to punish them.” We can understand that the justice of God metes out penalty for crime, wages for work done; but, strange sound!—sound that the ear of nature is not accustomed to—if we confess our sins, he is not ready

to punish them, not faithful and just to destroy us, but "faithful and just to forgive us." Now this is a truth that man has the greatest difficulty in believing, and yet it is the very truth that God is ever inculcating. How striking such words as these wherein God says to sinners: "Come now,"—how beautiful the term is!—"Come now, and let us reason together." God asking man to reason with him! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be as crimson, they shall be as wool." How very condescending on the part of the great God—"Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool!"

But this confession to God—"if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive"—assumes that he hears the confession. "If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive." Then God hears our confession, and there is no doubt about it. You need not fear lest words uttered in silence and secrecy on earth have no echo in heaven; you need not doubt that the least feeling of sorrow that sweeps over the human heart shall send a shadow into the presence of God himself. He hears the pulse at the heart—the thought, the wish, the feeling, the desire—faster than we can utter them. Man may be deaf, priests may be hostile, but God ever hears if we confess our sins. Who cares whether a priest be willing or unwilling to forgive it? we need not feel alarmed at it. If we confess our sins, God is faithful, whoever be unfaithful; and God is just, whoever be unjust, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



But what is meant by that expression, "He is faithful" to do it? Human nature may arrive at this,—God may be merciful to forgive us; but—this is strange—"faithful and just to forgive sin." It would seem altogether the very reverse of forgiveness that would flow from faithfulness and justice; but it is not so. To be faithful means to be steadfast to a promise made, a word given, or a declaration uttered. Now if you open any part of the Bible you will find it full of promises of pardon, full of invitations to pardon, full of types, shadows, institutions, all indicating the possibility of pardon of sin. In one part, "I will be merciful to their iniquities; their sins and their transgressions will I remember no more." He says in another part, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "All his promises in Christ are yea, and Amen." "Faithful," says an apostle, "is he who has promised." Now, wherever you find a promise made in the Bible to you—that is, to sinners—you may plead it with God in prayer: "O Lord, show thyself faithful to fulfil in my happy experience this blessed and consolatory promise;" and the answer is, "God is faithful." You need not doubt it; you may assume it, you may act upon it, and lay the whole stress of the future upon the reality of it.

But it is added, he is not only *faithful*, but he is also *just* to forgive us our sins. He is *just* to forgive us our sins! Merciful to forgive, we do understand; but, just to forgive! how can that be? Here is the

very attribute, justice, which is the exactor of penalty, declared to be the missionary of pardon. Here is the very attribute that we have always regarded as hostile to our admission into heaven now proclaimed to be not only friendly, but to embosom the very right and title of our admission. Here is what we always regarded as the great obstruction to our entrance into heaven announced to be the great impulse, and incentive, and attraction to it. How can this be? I answer: Exclude the Atonement, of which all the atonements in Leviticus were dim prefigurations, and there is no solution of it; but admit the great thought of an Atonement, and it is as plain and clear as daylight itself.

Unless there be some process by which God can vindicate his law, satisfy his own everlasting and immutable attributes, and yet extend forgiveness, God cannot be faithful and just to forgive us our sins. But there is such a provision. Christ bore the penalty, paid the price, endured the curse, exhausted the punishment (vary the phraseology as you please); and God, having received from him, my representative (I do not stop to discuss the principle of accepting a substitute for us; I only assert it as fact, enunciated in the Bible)—God having accepted Christ as my substitute—Christ having borne all that I had deserved as a sinner, and having done all that I owed as a creature,—there is no sin on me to be punished, whatever sin there may be in me unworthy of heaven; for I can plead before God,—Why should I suffer when my Representative has suffered for me? Why should I be excluded from heaven when my Representative has made a way for me? Thou art a just God: thou

dost not exact the price twice; thou dost not demand the penalty twice; and therefore in Him who is my representative, my substitute, my righteousness, I ask not of thy mercy only to forgive me, but I ask of thee to be faithful to thy word, and just by Christ Jesus, to forgive me all my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. It is mercy that I can plead it; it is justice that God thus bestows it. Do not, therefore, if I speak to a sinner—or rather, to a Christian—do not, therefore, think that the law will stand in your way to heaven; do not fear that God's attributes will stand in your way to glory. All his attributes, instead of being your enemies, are your irresistible and eloquent advocates. God's attributes are sentinels around the chiefest of sinners that flee to him through Christ, as the mountains stand around Jerusalem. In other words, there is no condemnation—to whom? There is no curse, no hell, no punishment—to whom? Not to those that are perfect, not to those that never sinned,—but “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” their representative, their substitute. And how beautiful is that text which I have often quoted,—“He was made sin for us, that we might be made righteousness in him!” How was he made sin for us? Our sins were laid on him—therefore he bore the consequence. How are we made righteousness by him? By his righteousness laid upon us—therefore we inherit the consequences. If God was just when he let forth his wrath upon Christ because of our sins upon him, not in him, God will be but just to let forth the expressions of his love because of Christ's righteousness upon us, not in us. When Christ died in agony upon the cross, there was nothing in him

worthy of death ; when I shall be admitted into heaven at the judgment seat, there will be nothing in me worthy of eternal life. Christ's title to a cross was my sin on him ; and my title to a weight of glory will be his righteousness upon me. God therefore is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. What a glorious truth ! No man who understands justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ will ever become a papist—it is impossible ; and nothing will save you from superstition and delusion, and all the mummeries of exploded and miserable superstition, except a clear living grasp of this, that we need nothing to perfect a title which is perfect, because Christ's ; we need nothing to increase an atonement which is all-efficacious, because Christ's ; we are complete in him, all our salvation and all our desire. And to show you that my conclusions are not mere conclusions of the intellect, an apostle could say, after speaking of such truths as these, " Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? "—that is, God's people. Will God do it ? No, says the apostle, " It is God that justifieth." What is meant by justifying ? To justify is explained for instance, in the Proverbs, where he says, " He that justifieth the wicked and condemneth the just, doeth abomination." In other words, who shall justify the wicked, pronounce them innocent or unimpeachable who are really criminal ? Well now, to justify us is to pronounce us just through the justice of another, who are otherwise criminal ; and our justification lies not in our grace of holiness, but in God's act of grace ; not in our deeds, but in his deed of absolution and forgiveness ; not in my estimate of myself, but in

God's sentence upon me. Well now, says the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, "it is God that justifieth." "Who is he that condemneth?" Not Christ. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." And therefore he adds—mind you, Paul, a sinner, according to his own confession the chiefest of sinners, whose early life was employed in persecuting and proscribing and murdering the followers of Jesus; this Paul, by grace, was brought into that state that he could say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What a triumphant clause! and yet it is not the language of presumption, it is the language of humble trust. Presumption means thinking that God can pardon without a sacrifice—that he can be just to forgive without an atonement; but humility is feeling we have nothing and deserve nothing; but feeling that God is so faithful, so just, that we can anticipate far richer results than we enjoy in the present: that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now that expression, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins," reminds me of the infinite variety of expressions that God uses to tell us how complete *this act of forgiveness* is. He is faithful and just to

forgive us. I do not know any one thought clothed in such variegated drapery as the thought of God's forgiving sin. He varies the phraseology not to express his meaning, but to interest and engage our hearts. For instance, in one part he calls it "remission of sins." Man is in bondage, surrounded by dungeon walls; the chains of his sins bind him to the spot. God touches his chains, they are dissolved by the touch, and he has remission of sins, or the loosing of his bonds. Then another phrase he employs is, "not imputing our sins." They are countless as the sand, they are innumerable as the hairs on our head; and yet he does not impute them. Why? Because he imputed them to Christ. Another expression is, "Not remembered"—"I will remember their sins and their iniquities no more." In the Levitical sacrifices there is a remembrance of sin made every year, but by this sacrifice there is no remembrance of sin for ever; as if God, in order to convince us of the completeness of the pardon, had said, that they shall be expunged from his memory for ever. Again, he uses the expression, "Cover their sins"—"whose sins thou hast covered." The Hebrew word *kaphar*, which means to cover, and from which our English word "cover" comes, is the word used in the Old Testament for the atonement; and the meaning of it is, that just as a man covered with a robe—an external robe—has thus concealed from the eye under-ropes that may not be so fair or beautiful; so a sinner—sinner in himself—having spread over him the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, thus has his sin covered. And the meaning of it is, not that it is a material transaction, but that God will deal with

him just as if he were spotless as the driven snow, unstained, beautiful, and perfect.

Another expression is, "Taking away our sins." The Israelite confessed his sins over the head of the scape-goat; then the goat was dismissed into the desert; and the sins of the Israelite, thus confessed, were typically transferred to the goat, and never any more heard of.

Another expression is, "Blotting out." Just as if your sins were like inscriptions upon the sand of the sea shore, washed out by the first wave of infinite and boundless love.

Another expression is, "Casting behind his back." In one passage, "Our secret sins hast thou set in the light of thy countenance,"—a most awful expression; but in order to show you the completeness of his forgiveness, "All our sins he has cast behind his back." And again, the expression occurs, "cleansing"—"the blood of Christ," that is, the efficacy of his sacrifice, "cleanseth from all sin." Another passage which contains almost every epithet is, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, that passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, that keepeth not his anger for ever, delighteth in mercy? He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Now, if meaning is not conveyed by these expressions of the completeness, the instancy of a sinner's forgiveness, then this Book has no meaning at all. But why all this—why all this phraseology so varied, so cumulative? The answer is,—It is so difficult to persuade you that God will do it. As I have often said, *it is the simplicity of Christianity that is its stumbling-*

block. It is not a sacrifice to offer, a priest to sacrifice it, penance to do, payment to make; but it is just to believe this truth, embosomed in the text on which I am preaching to you this day; and which I have unfolded, not wandered from. The man that can take this text home with him, and with his heart feel it, and from his heart confess, and with his heart believe—that man is a true Christian, and the rest of his life hereafter will be irresistible demonstration that he is so. And hence it is added here, while God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, he is also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now this is something additional. Many persons, when they hear the evangelical minister preach, and pronounce that our admission into heaven is not because of anything we may do, but in spite of it—when they hear the minister preach that our title to glory, our admission into heaven, is not in consequence of anything done by us, but in spite of everything done by us in the past, they say, “Why, if people act up to that minister’s prescriptions, they will plunge into every sort of sin; they will feel that sin is no barrier to their admission into heaven.” That is what you feel, I dare say, when you look at it from a distance; but you well know that when a man has got this sense of God’s fatherly goodness he has received a new life, and he does not want to do what he wanted to do before. This is not a theorem for man to act upon, but it is a life for man continually to live. Wherever there is the pardon of sin by an act of grace without, there is the ceaseless extinction of sin by the Spirit’s influence within. Our pardon is a change of state; our cleansing from all unrighteous-



ness is a change of character. Because we say good works are of no use as our title to heaven, we do not say we are not therefore to do good works; our title to heaven is irrespective of them altogether, but our fitness for heaven is just that character which you have—living soberly and righteously in this present world. We lost our title to heaven in Paradise; Christ has restored it in his righteousness. We defaced our image of God in Paradise, and the Holy Spirit restores that image by his presence. So that a Christian forgiven freely through Christ's righteousness, and accepted and justified, is day by day sanctified—day by day he seeks love to guide him, grace to influence him, the Holy Spirit to keep him from falling.

Having seen the very substance and pith of all that is most precious in the gospel, let me ask, Have you—hast thou, ever confessed thy sins, thy secret sins; the sins of thy youth, the sins of thy riper years, the sins of the solemn things, the omissions you have made, the commissions you have perpetrated? You have confessed them in the sanctuary, but have you ever confessed them when no mortal ear could hear them at all? Have you ever been alone with God? Have you ever felt, have you ever realized, being alone with God? You must one day be so; you must walk through the valley of the shadow of death alone; you must render up the ghost alone. Physicians may accompany you to the brink of the grave; enter they cannot. They may go with you to the very verge of the valley of the shadow of death; accompany you they cannot. Is it not well, is it not expediency, is it *not duty*,—oh, no! is it not rather precious privilege

in this life, to be occasionally alone with God? Do not let every man say, "This is meant for a whole audience;" it is meant as much for you A, for you B, for you C, as if you and I were the only two speaking together this day. What one so grieves is, that persons treat an appeal to their consciences as porters treat a heavy load—when six carry it, it is very light upon each shoulder. And you think, because there are some seventeen hundred listening to me, therefore a very small and infinitesimal quantity of it extends to you. But what I say to all I say to each, as if that individual were the only one present. I ask,—Have I ever been alone with God? Have I confessed to him my secret sins—sins the world does not know, sins that may be forgiven, but that cannot be forgotten? My dear friends, if it has never been so, I will not pronounce on such—that is not my function; but I will say that he has great reason to suspect if he be a Christian at all. He may be an amiable man—a gentle, quiet, charitable, generous man; and all this he ought to be. Surely, surely, all this you ought to be. But there is something more than that; there is relationship to a God we need restored; there is restoration to an image we have lost; there is reinstatement in a favour we have forfeited: have we found that? Our sun is setting behind the western hills: will he rise to us more beautiful in the everlasting east? The tide is ebbing: if we miss it, our voyage to the everlasting haven may be lost for ever. Is our trust on the Rock of Ages? Is our confidence in God's faithfulness and justice to forgive us our sins—suppose death were now to overtake you (and I am not supposing anything very extraordinary) what

would you say, what could you say? Oh! would you be constrained to say, "I heard truths that would make the lost in misery leap for ecstasy, that angels listen to, and are startled by their music; and I heard them, and went, one to his farm and another to his merchandise: and I have not rejected—for I never was bold enough to do that—but I have neglected the great salvation!"

But how shall we escape, if we, not reject, but *neglect*, so great salvation?

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SACRIFICE OF SWEET-SMELLING SAVOUR.

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”—EPHESIANS v. 2.

THE words of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour,” best illustrate two or three expressions almost similar in word which have occurred in the first three chapters of the Book of Leviticus. In the course of these three chapters we have read very frequently the expression, “Sweet savour unto the Lord,” “A savour of a sweet smell,” or “A sweet-smelling savour unto God.” Thus in the first chapter, at the ninth verse: “A burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.” Thus again, in the seventeenth verse: “It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.” In the second chapter, at the ninth verse: “It is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord;” and again, at the fifth verse of the third chapter: “It is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.” You observe that almost at the close of every

offering, and as the consequence of the presentation of every victim, if acceptable to God, it is presented under the expressive and the beautiful figure of a sacrifice, fragrant of a sweet smell, acceptable to Him by whose order it has been offered, and in order to propitiate or draw down whose mercy it has been presented by the offerer.

Now, the words of Paul, that I have just read in his Epistle to the Ephesians, are the echo of the words of Moses, in the first three chapters of Leviticus: in fact, the verse I have given is an epitome, or summary in brief of the meaning, the end, and the object of the many sacrifices, presented by many priests, which could never take away sin, now summed up, represented and finished in that one Sacrifice offered once for all upon the cross, through which we have access to God, and by which we are sanctified.

The apostle then speaks of Christ himself, as the Giver, who gave himself; he then speaks for what he gave himself; he then describes that gift under the figure of an offering and a sacrifice; and then he describes its acceptableness to God under the figure of "a sweet-smelling savour unto God."

We have first of all, then, in this *résumé* of the end and object of all the sacrifices of Levi, the Giver who gave himself. Who was he? First, he was man. We assert, just as strongly as the Socinian can assert, that Jesus was man. It is the glory of the Gospel that he was so. The object of the evangelists is not to prove that he was God; every Jew believed that the Messiah was God; but the difficulty that the Jews felt was,—had he become man? which the Jew constantly and consistently denied. Now, we assert that

Jesus was man, in all points as we are;—in his heart the echo of our wrongs; in his nature sympathy with our sorrows and our sufferings that are deepest; in all points touched and tempted like as we are: but only without sin, which is no part of humanity. Sin is no part of me. When God made me, he did not make sin in me; sin was no part of man when God pronounced him in Eden to be very good. So Christ was perfect man. And, in the next place, he was a royal man. He was descended of a royal, but a dis-crowned family; sunk by poverty, affliction, obscurity. And he was royal in that he was a king. “Art thou a king?” “Thou sayest,”—that is, I am. All the prerogatives of royalty were, and are, his.

But whilst he was man—a sinless man, and a royal man—he that gave himself was also God. I cannot consent to weed out the texts that say Christ was God, and fling them away, and fasten on the texts that say he was man, and strain and stretch them to the utmost. I must read the Bible just as God has inspired it; and if I read upon the one page, “The Word was made flesh,”—“Jesus is a man of sorrows;” why should I weed out of the next page, “By him all things were made; and without him was not anything made that was made.”—“And though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he took upon him the form of a servant?” How can the Socinian say the form of God is not the same as God? Then, I must add, the form of a servant is not the same as a servant. But if the taking upon him the form of a servant, means that he really became a servant; so, in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, means that he was

God over all, blessed for evermore. But I need no text to demonstrate that Christ was God, except the simple prediction, that he is to be the Judge of all flesh. If God be not upon the judgment-seat, where can he be? If there be a place where the presence of Deity is demanded, it is that place where all hearts will be laid bare—where all destinies will be adjusted—where the mighty group will consist of the millions and millions of the world from the beginning. If man be capable of searching all hearts, fixing all destinies, and, with perfect accuracy, dealing with each according to what he is, man cannot be what he is defined to be in the Bible—the frail, the imperfect, the weak, the limited creature, that our own experience also attests him to be. And, at all events, if Christ be not God, the inhabitants of heaven must be guilty of blasphemy. I open the Apocalypse; I gaze in at that door which John saw opened in heaven; I listen to the anthems that are there. No Socinian can be there; it is impossible he could join in the hymns of heaven. How could a Socinian say, “Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood, unto him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever?” How could a Unitarian say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive praise, and thanksgiving, and glory, and honour!”—“Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood out of every kindred, and every nation, and every tongue, and we shall reign with thee?” That is the language of adoration, of praise, of prayer.

Thus, then, the Being who gave himself was God—first man, a sinless man, a royal, though a discrowned man; and lastly God.

Now, what did he give ? He gave *himself*. Mark the language—*gave*, not *was induced to give*, or *permitted to be given*, or *had exacted from him*—he *gave* freely, generously, as the expression of irrepressible love, in the exercise of boundless benevolence : he freely gave. And he gave—what ? Not an angel ; the highest hierarch about the throne has no more holy light than he needs for himself. He has nothing to spare for me. Every creature is made with sufficient for its own orbit, and for the continuance of its own beautiful and holy being ; but it has nothing to spare for others. And he did not give any saint. The virgins that were wise had oil in their own lamps ; they had none to spare for others. The highest Christian in this assembly has grace ; he has none to spare for another. He can tell you where he got his supply—where you are welcome to go also for supply ; but he can spare nothing, nor give ought of what God has given him for himself. Nor did he give riches. Money, that has the most rapid currency on earth, has no currency in heaven ; it has not the impress and the superscription of Him who reigns supreme there. “Ye are not redeemed with gold or silver, or any such corruptible thing.” Nor, in the last place, did he give the blood of bulls and of goats, which were shadows of that which should be. These, I say, so frequently alluded to in Leviticus, were the dim footprints of his advent ; leading the believer to stretch his hopes onward to the cross, and to rely on and glorify him. If these sacrifices could have atoned for sin, having done their work, they would have ceased to be offered. But the fact, says the apostle, that they were offered year by year, was proof that they never could make the comers



thereunto perfect. He therefore gave, not the blood of bulls and of innocent goats, but something more precious than all these. He gave himself. He was man, that he might be capable of suffering what we had drawn down upon ourselves; he was God, that he might be able to give virtue to all those sufferings that should make them, not the sufferings of a man, but the sufferings of an atoning and an expiatory victim. He gave himself. He gave his body to sorrow and the sword; he gave his soul to sorrow, but not to the sword; he gave his deity neither to sorrow nor to the sword, but to communicate virtue, efficacy, all that was needed to render his sufferings not those of a creature enduring chastisement from a father, nor of a criminal enduring punishment from a judge; but of a victim, making expiation for the sins of all that believe.

And he gave himself alone. There was no partner in his agony. When Mary obtruded herself upon him, he repelled her firmly, but gently. And as there was no partner in his agony, as he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him, as there is no salvation in any other name given among men, so there will be no sharer in his glory. He endured the cross; he must wear exclusively the crown: he bore all the penalty, and exhausted it; he must receive all the glory of the ransom of his precious blood—he gave himself alone.

And to whom did he give himself? He gave himself to God, says the apostle, in the text. Against God we had sinned; to God was the reparation due. He was the party offended; the great obstruction was between him and us. Till he was satisfied, sinners, by the very nature of the thing, never could be saved.

Whilst he gave himself to God, says the apostle, he gave himself to God for us. Now let anybody read the language of Leviticus, and see what is said of the different sacrifices, offerings, *holocausts*; and then read what is said of Christ's death, and see the very same language applied to Christ's death that was applied to the offerings, the victims, and the sacrifices of Levi; and then say, is it possible to come to any other conclusion than this—that Christ lived and died for us, not an example how purely we should live, nor a precedent how magnanimously we should die, but an atonement, a substitute, a vicarious offering, a sacrifice for our sins, that they might be forgiven, and that the guilty might be gloriously saved?

He gave himself, first, it says in our text, an offering for us—an offering and a sacrifice. His whole life was an offering, his whole death was a sacrifice. I say, his whole life was an offering. He opened his ear to every command of God, and did it. He did for us creatures in his life all that we ought to do. His obedience, it is true, was exemplary, just as the exactions of the law are obligatory; but this is the emphatic distinction of his obedience—that he obeyed as our representative and substitute, not as a model for us to imitate, but as an offering for us to plead; not as an example for us to follow only, but as a righteousness for us to put on. He did what as creatures we had not done; he obeyed a law which, as creatures, we could not obey; and thus his whole beautiful and spotless life was a holy and a spotless offering to God of absolute, unspent, and unwavering obedience; not for me to imitate merely, but for me to put on, to be clothed in, to plead as my right and

my title to heaven, saying to God at the judgment-seat, "I have obeyed that law in Christ my Head and Representative; and therefore I am entitled to all the promises and the blessings it contains."

But while he lived as an offering, it is added he died also as a sacrifice. He gave himself, says the apostle, an offering and a sacrifice. His tears of anguish, his agony of soul, his painful death, closed by his last cry, "It is finished!" was the complete *holocaust*, the complete burnt sacrifice made upon the cross for us and for our sins. And just mark how complete this character is. As creatures we owed obedience to the law of our Creator; Christ gave it for us. As sinners we had incurred the curse of God our Judge; Christ bore that curse for us. So that when I am asked, why should not the curse fall upon me, with its ceaseless and corroding pressure? I answer, My Head, my Representative, my Substitute, has borne it, and exhausted it for me. Why should I be admitted into heaven, not having obeyed the law? My answer is, My Head, my Representative, accepted by God for me in my stead, has obeyed the law for me. Therefore, justified by his righteousness, forgiven by his sacrifice, there is no sin *on* me, while there are many sins *in* me; and I am clothed with spotless righteousness; and may be presented in him, and through him, and by his merits, part and parcel of his glorious church, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing. How complete is a sinner in Christ the Saviour!

Let us notice in the next place, that this sacrifice and offering is described as a sweet-smelling savour; and for this I have especially selected the text. What is meant

by this? We find it explained in the Book of Genesis, where Noah, after he came forth from the ark, offered up a sacrifice, a burnt-offering; and the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake. We have the very same expression explained, rather than used, in Philippians iv. 18, where the apostle says, "But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing"—that is the explanation—"to God." Now, what was it in Christ that was thus well pleasing or acceptable to God? It was not, as the Unitarian would say, his holy and spotless obedience, his pure life, only that was thus acceptable; it was no doubt; but the apostle says, the thing that was acceptable to God—that was a sweet-smelling savour, that rose to heaven like an ascending cloud of delicious fragrance, was his sacrifice and his offering. It was not an example of a sweet-smelling savour, but a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet-smelling savour. In other words, what God regards specially as acceptable to him, is the atoning death, the meritorious righteousness of Christ, our substitute, our sacrifice, and our salvation. But, you ask, Why should this be specially pleasing and acceptable to God? Has God any pleasure in suffering? We are told he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner; how much less could he have had pleasure in the death, the agony, the suffering of the spotless, the holy, the blameless, Son of God? He could have had no pleasure in this. Then what was it that made these sufferings so fragrant before God? Christ explains it. He says that what made him endure the

cross with such delight, was the joy set before him. Isaiah thus explains the joy set before him, "He shall see of the travail of his soul,"—that is, the result of it,—“and he shall be satisfied.” And, therefore, just as Christ bore the cross for the sake of the magnificent results it should achieve, so God looked at his sufferings, and saw through them those glorious harvests of which angels shall be the reapers, and on which God should look with infinite satisfaction, and unspeakable delight.

But what are some of the results accomplished by this offering and sacrifice that make it a sweet smelling savour, acceptable to God? I answer, first, the law of God is vindicated in the death of Christ, and covered with a richer lustre than it ever could have been covered with if Adam and Eve had remained in their first innocence, and Eden retained amaranthine verdure and beauty. The law set in the innocence of first obedience would have been beautiful; but the law in the setting of Christ's obedience for us is more lustrous and splendid still. It is more seen to be holy, just, faithful, indestructible, because, God would rather than that one jot or tittle should pass from his law, that the whole of humanity should perish, or his own Son, its substitute, should suffer in its stead.

And, in the second place, it is a sweet smelling savour to God, inasmuch as God's children are all saved through it. I cannot conceive the universe to have any order, God's law to have any fixity, God himself to be a holy God, if he admits the guilty and the innocent, the fallen and the unfallen, equally to *the enjoyment*, or relatively to the enjoyment, of the

glories of the blessed. It was impossible that man could be saved by nature by the law as he is, without some interposition that should satisfy all demands, meet every necessity, make provision for every requirement, and enable God, if I may use the expression, to receive the guilty as if the guilty had never fallen. Now in Christ's death sin is forgiven, and the sinner is saved, while the law is upheld, and God is glorified. And the sin, while forgiven to the sinner, is by the same process made more hateful to the sinner; so that there is not only pardon for the past, but in the same process by which the pardon is conveyed, there is a guarantee that there shall be greater, richer, nobler conformity to God's law in all the future.

And in the next place, the sacrifice was a sweet-smelling savour to God, inasmuch as it gives glory to himself. You see much of God in creation, and if it had never been stained, creation's bright mirror had reflected vastly more of God's goodness than it now does; we see much of God in the law,—“Thou shalt, and thou shalt not;” and its exactions, which extend not to words and deeds, but to thoughts and imaginations: but we see vastly more of God—of his holiness, of his justice, of his truth, and of his love in the forgiveness of a sinner, through Christ the sacrifice, than we ever could have seen if Calvary had never been, and Christ had never suffered. And I doubt not that what has been transacted upon this earth is not for this earth alone. This earth is the mirror into which all the orbs of the universe, circling it as in a splendid zone, continually gaze to learn how holy God is—that rather than that his law should be broken his Son should suffer to see how just God is, and, above

all, how loving God is ; that he so loved the guilty in their ruins, that he would do anything short of the sacrifice of his law to save them ; “ he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might never perish, but have eternal life.” The chapters of this world’s history will be read for millions and millions of years to come. I have no doubt that this earth is the most wonderful phenomenon in time or in eternity. I have no doubt that this world, with all that has taken place upon it, is a spectacle that angels and unfallen worlds will never weary in gazing at. It is God’s great lesson-book for all the universe beside ; and as orb after orb, and race after race, hear of its wondrous tidings, they will join with the redeemed that are around the throne in new bursts of song, in new anthems to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto our God.

Let me notice, in the next place, that it was this perfume that made the offerings of Levi at all tolerable to God and to man. I can conceive nothing in itself more offensive than the ancient temple or tabernacle ; it was almost a sort of slaughter-house ; the constant bleeding of slain lambs and sheep, and bullocks, was a most offensive, painful, undesirable process. Then why was it borne ? It was the fragrance of this offering that was to be in the fulness of the time that mingled with the smoke of Levi’s sacrifices, and made them acceptable before God. Take away Christianity from Leviticus, and Leviticus would only be fit for the gods of the Pantheon ; but let the light of the evangelist fall upon *the face of Levi*—let the offering of Christ be seen in

their burnt-offerings—let this perfume be smelt in their ascending smoke—let the shadow of Jesus be seen upon the walls of the ancient sanctuary,—and what in itself was so offensive to flesh and blood becomes beautiful, and holy, and fragrant, and acceptable to God.

And, lastly, it is this sweet-smelling savour of Christ's sacrifice, and the advocacy that follows it, that render all that we think, all that we do, our best and our holiest acts, acceptable to God. You have it fully explained in that very beautiful passage in the Apocalypse, where we read that an angel, namely, Christ, stood at the altar of incense, where the high priest stood, having a golden censer, which the high priest alone had ; and there was given to him much incense, the sweet-smelling savour of his own sacrifice, that he should offer the incense with the prayers of all saints, to give perfume, and efficacy, and acceptance to those prayers, upon the golden altar which was before the throne ; that our prayers, and our praises, and our acts, and our alms, may be thus acceptable to God, not in themselves, but because put into the golden censer, mingled with the ascending perfume, which, like a sweet-smelling savour, rises to God, ever an acceptable sacrifice.



## CHAPTER IV.

### OUR ADVOCATE.

“ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.  
And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus  
Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;  
and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”  
1 JOHN ii. 1.

You will easily perceive that the text I have selected alludes almost in word to the sins of ignorance of which we have been reading in the fourth chapter of the Book of Leviticus. The provision, as I explained, in that chapter, is for sins committed in ignorance; the provision in the text I have quoted is, “ If any man sin ”—whether he know it or not; be it a sin of ignorance, or a sin of wilfulness—“ we have an advocate with the Father,” who is, what the sacrifice in Leviticus was typically—“ the propitiation,” the atonement “ for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

I know nothing so satisfactory to the Christian, or so precious, as the truths enunciated by the Evangelist John. And whether we take his beautiful gospel called “ the Gospel of the Father,” because it is the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of believers *that* that personation of love mostly dwells on—or,

whether we take his Three Epistles—one general, and the other special, to an Elect Lady—we find in all these precious truths which make miserable hearts happy, lead sinful souls to the knowledge of forgiveness, and the victims of despair to be the inheritors of a blessed hope beyond the sky. How precious the sentiment in the first chapter here—“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son,”—not once cleansed, and has now lost its efficacy, but *cleanseth*—the present tense—in 1854 just as fully as 1800 years ago! And it cleanseth, not from some sins; not from trivial ones, or what are called venial ones; but from all sin. What a truth to live with! What a hope to die in! Not the literal blood—as it was literal in the case of the slain bullock—but the precious efficacy of it. Christ is sacrificed for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; meaning that the sacrifice burned upon the altar is thus presented amid incense in the holy of holies, and, as the ceaseless perfume of that deed that was done on Calvary 1800 years ago, it rises to heaven like aromatic incense, and spreads to the skies, exhilarating to all that are there, and acceptable like a sweet savour of perfume before the Most High.

“If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves.” There is no perfection upon earth; we cannot have on earth the innocence that Adam had—it is gone; we cannot have on earth the perfection that saints in glory have—it is not come. Our condition upon earth is a law in our members warring against the law of our spirit; the ascendancy obtained through struggle; imperfection upon earth; the Christian life, like the April day, sunshine and showers in succession, cloud and brightness alternating, but ending

at length in a bright sky that never shall be clouded. If any man say, "I have no sin," that man is either trying to deceive me, or he deceives himself. Then what does he say? "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but"—beautiful addition!—"if we confess our sins,"—not to the priest, because we have not sinned against him; but to God, of whom he is speaking,—“if we confess our sins, God is”—not merciful; that you could easily suppose—but he is faithful to his promise to forgive—"he is faithful and just." God is just while justifying the believer. How beautiful, that the two attributes of God that human nature would quote against forgiveness, as it imagines, the apostle quotes as the very two that seal, and sanction, and proclaim our complete forgiveness—"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins!" And then again, lest poor human nature should forget this precious resource, he repeats, "If any man sin"—whether the high priest, or the ruler of the people, or one of the common people, or one of the congregation—"if *any* man sin,"—whatever he be, whatever his age, his position, or rank—"if any man sin, we have"—we have, not hope for—"an advocate with the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only," but it is available to all the ends of the earth, for all that will accept it.

Thus, we see how much of the Gospel is in this beautiful epistle, even on its very preface. He begins the second chapter with this remark, "My little children." When John wrote this epistle, he was very nearly ninety years of age; the Book of Revelation *was written* in Patmos when he was nearly a hundred;

but he was at least ninety when he wrote this epistle. Pause to imagine, that beautiful grey hair, resplendent with the first beams of the approaching glory; and think of that venerable saint, ripe in grace, and consecrated, not otherwise, by years, addressing believers as his "little children,"—his family, his flock—and saying, "I write unto you," not that you may reverence me, or do anything for me; but "I write unto you that ye sin not." And what does he teach by this? That the whole strain and tendency of Christianity, the whole scope of God's revealed Word, is to put an end to sin. Its promises, its precepts, its hopes, its requirements, its thoughts, all go to put an end to sin. Nobody can deny, whatever else he may assert, that the Bible's tendency is to make man holier and happier even upon earth; and if we did not see its tendency, it so frequently asserts it, that we cannot possibly deny it. "Ye are a chosen generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him who hath called you from darkness into his marvellous light." "The grace of God teacheth us to live soberly, righteously, godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope." The best evidence of Christianity is its fruits. I do not say there may not be noble, honourable, impressive *traits* in human character without Christianity; but I do say that wherever Christianity is, those *traits* will be, and not only will they be, but they will be beautified, and inspired, and covered with a richer glory. When we assert that man is fallen and corrupt, we do not mean to say that earth has become a Pandemonium, and that men are become demons. This is not true. There are still on the surface of humanity the linger-

ing rays of Paradise ; there are still in the hearts of humanity the feelings that were first felt in Paradise ; there is much that is beautiful in human nature developed by its finest specimens ; but we must also admit that there is much that is degraded and desperately wicked in these, and developed by its worst ; and we still more maintain that the only power that can lift human nature to that table-land on which it will shine most beautiful, and bear its most fragrant fruit, is the Gospel of the Son of God.

“ Little children, I write unto you that ye sin not.” This is the end and object of my writing. But he says, “ If any man sin.” He says, it is quite plain that while this is what we ought not to do, it is right that there should be a provision made for what will occur in the case of every man, in every age, and under every circumstance. “ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” And then this is connected with the previous passage—that “ if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” But the phrase, “ if any man sin,” implies that purity and holiness will be the spontaneous fruits of Christian character, and that the sin will be incidental or accidental. He assumes throughout the whole passage, that not to sin is the polarity or the tendency of a true Christian ; but he also admits the possibility, nay, the probability, nay, the certainty, of a flaw in the best—sin in the holiest ; and therefore he states the provision, “ If any man sin.” Man breathes an infected air ; he has a law in his members still warring against the law of his soul : and he that knows his own heart best will be the first to sympathize with the infirmities, the sins, as well as the fears of

the rest of mankind. The least enlightened are the least sympathizing; the truest Christian has ever the richest sympathy. The high priest of old had infirmities and ignorances that he must atone for; but our Great High Priest alone has no ignorance or infirmity of his own to atone for; but it is said, we have one who can sympathize with our infirmities, and can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.

Having thus seen the introduction to the provision, let me notice now its two leading positions—namely, an Advocate with the Father, and a propitiation for our sins.

We have, first of all, he says, an advocate with the Father; a paraclete: the word, singularly enough, applied to the Holy Spirit of God, meaning one that represents us. In fact, excluding the infirmity that cleaves to the human, it is just the advocate and the client in the human court; but instead of an advocate and a client having to deal with a judge bound to rigid law, it is an Advocate with our Father, dealing with his children according to mercy, as well as justice, after love as well as truth. We have an Advocate with the Father, and thus, as our advocate, Christ appears in heaven. How significant is that expression of the apostle—"Christ has gone to heaven to appear for us!" There is no intimation that he speaks for us in heaven; whilst he has still human lips, and a human heart, and human sensibilities, yet there is no evidence that he speaks for us. All that the apostle says, is, that he appears for us. Let him be dumb, the spectacle is intensely eloquent; let our Advocate say nothing, yet there he is, with all the

traces of his agony—with all the trophies of his victory—our representative, the first-fruits of our humanity; so that whatever he deserves we deserve; whatever he is—whatever he has attained—we may be. There is the possibility of our admission into heaven, for a human one has gone before us; there is the certainty of our admission, for our Advocate is there pleading for us; and pleading, not with a judge that delights to repel us, but with our Father, too happy (if I may speak in language strictly human) to have an opportunity of letting forth his mercy upon us. An Advocate with the Father.

We notice, in the next place, while he is our Advocate with the Father, it is in connexion with forgiveness. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” What is the use of the advocate here? To obtain for him that sin’s forgiveness. If sin were impossible in Christians, then an advocate would be unnecessary in heaven. As long as we have an advocate with the Father, so long there is the possibility of our sinning upon earth. And what does he say when he secures for us forgiveness? He answers the law, replies to every objection. What does an advocate do now? If an honest one, and not one that gets up and speaks lies in order to let a criminal escape, he will put every point that is favourable to his client in the most prominent light; and he will also, if the law goes against his client, state what reasons there are for softening or mitigating the penalty of the law. He will not deny his guilt, but he will show reasons for a mitigated sentence. Our Blessed Lord does not deny our sin in fact, or guilt, but he shows how it may be pardoned.

He does not deny that God is just, but he shows (I am speaking of course in human speech ; it is all seen, it needs not to be laid out in heaven in detail ; but I am analyzing it, and stating in fragments what we can only comprehend in fragments,) hows God's justice, and truth, and faithfulness, and love, may be more glorious, may be seen by the universe more intense in their character, by the forgiveness of the greatest sinner that has recourse to the Advocate with the Father, than they ever could have been seen by the extinction of our orb, and the condemnation of all his progeny upon it. Now what a blessed thought is this—that our Advocate in heaven, whether in speech or otherwise, is at this moment showing that there are no such reasons for our ruin, as there are for our salvation ; that there are ten thousand times ten thousand more reasons why you and I should be saved for ever, than there are why you and I should be condemned. It is easy to teach men to be terrified at God, and to think of God as a terrible and an awful Being, ready to consume them in a moment ; but it is very difficult to persuade them that God seeks to bless them ; that there is nothing to prevent his richest blessing descending upon them ; that the obstruction is not in Christ, the Way, but in their own hearts. “Ye will not come to me, that ye may be saved.”

Now, argues the apostle here, “If any man sin,” it is not, as in the case of thousands, to drive you to despair. He does not say, If any man sin, let him despair ; but, If any man sin, here is the provision. We have an Advocate. The tendency of a sinner when he sins, when he has been unfortunate enough to sin,



—for of all misfortunes on earth that is the worst—is, to run and hide himself from God—there is no doubt of this—and to try to get rid of the thoughts of his sin; and he thinks that he gets rid of his sin by getting rid of the thoughts of it; as an ostrich, pursued in the desert, buries its head in the sand, and thinks the Arab steed will be unable to overtake it, because it cannot see it. But that is not the way. John says, If any man sin, we are not to try to forget it, nor are we to despair; but we have an Advocate for such a contingency, to whom we may go and receive instantly forgiveness. Ask nature, “If any man sin, what is he to do?” Nature must answer, “I know not, and have been unable for six thousand years to discover.” Ask the law, “If any man sin, what is he to do?” It will answer, “There is only for him a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation.” Ask the Pope of Rome what he is to do. Kneel down and confess to a priest, and get absolution! Ask the Holy Spirit what he is to do. If any man sin, we have not a priest to introduce us, not a saint to guide us, but access, personally, directly, and without obstruction, to an Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Beautiful and blessed gospel! Is any man sick? We have a Physician. Is any man in debt? We have the great Paymaster, Jesus Christ. Any man dying? We have Life. Any oppressed? We have an Advocate to take up our cause. Any man guilty? A Propitiation for our sins.

Our Redeemer is here set before us officially—our Advocate. I want you to see the full stress of this. When we look upon Christ as our advocate, then he

becomes most dear, most precious. But he is our advocate, because it is his office. When a man holds an office, I apply to him in the expectation that he will fulfil the duties of that office. If I go to a physician, I do not expect that he is to send me away, or that he is to talk politics or science, but that he is to learn what my complaint is, and prescribe for its cure. If I go to a lawyer, I do not expect that he is to explain statutes or Acts of Parliament to me, but that he is to fulfil his office, and defend my cause. I expect the sun to shine, because he is appointed for that purpose; I expect the stars to twinkle at night, because such is their use; and I expect Jesus—I say it with reverence and with joy—to intercede for me, and plead for me, and take up my cause, because it is his office to do so. He is set forth, says the apostle, to be the propitiation for our sins, through faith in his precious blood. Now what a truth is here,—that no man can go to Christ as his advocate, and be rejected! It is his office to intercede and to plead.

But this expression, “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father,” implies that we have an advocate to apply to. We must fill up the sentence. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father *to apply to;*” not to pay for, not to search out, not to invent or create, but ready for his function, rejoicing to do his work, as the sun like a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber, and like a strong man to run a race, to apply to. And it is without any loss of time. “If any man sin we *have* an advocate;” not, we have to wait till arrangements are made, till adjustments are all filled; not, as we have to do when we go to consult a physician or a barrister, till his

chamber is emptied of crowds of previous applicants. But if any man sin, we have an advocate *now*, without interruption, without delay, and without obstruction of any kind, to apply to, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world; and the lightning flame does not flash from one end of the globe to another with such rapidity as the prayer of a sinner addressed to Jesus passes to the mercy-seat; for the promise is, "Whilst they are yet speaking, I will answer." Faster than an angel's wing can clip, the prayer of the humblest sinner rises to our Advocate.

Not only is it without loss of time, but we have an Advocate to apply to without labour. It is not now in Jerusalem the only place where sacrifices can be offered, where the high priest can be seen, and engaged to intercede and plead for us. It is not now on this mountain, nor on that mountain, that we have to pray. There are no deserts to cross, there are no distances to span, no broad seas between, but, without loss of time, without labour, without toil, everywhere and anywhere, on the ocean and on the land, in the height and in the depth,—if any man anywhere sin, we have an advocate everywhere to apply to, and he is the propitiation for our sins.

We have this Advocate to apply to without any intermediate party. You have not to ask a priest to introduce you, or to beg that he will use his patronage with your Advocate in your behalf. What a precious thought! The ground-work of Protestantism, that is, of Bible Christianity, is, that the sinner may approach the Father, through Christ Jesus, without asking the leave of priest, or presbyter, or prelate, or

pope, or any human being, or angel, saint, or cherubim. It is your privilege; and he that seizes his privilege most vigorously—acts upon it most instantly—is not guilty of the greatest presumption, but rather manifests the deepest humility. True humility is in doing what God bids us. If our most gracious Queen were to command the poorest and the humblest widow to step into her carriage with her, it would be true loyalty and true obedience instantly to accept the offer; and it would not be the truest and the noblest response to say, "I am not worthy." The King of kings bids you come to himself; true humility is to say, "Blessed Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

An advocate clearly implies a judge as well as a client; but this advocacy relates to a judge who is our Father. I have heard some one say, the Lord's Prayer, which begins with "Our Father," is not Christian enough: a more stupid or unscriptural opinion I cannot conceive it possible for human lips to express. The reason given for it is, because Christ's name does not occur in it. But who prayed it? Christ himself. When he first prayed it, he was the spokesman: when he knelt upon the streets of Jerusalem, with that frail group of twelve fishermen and publicans around him, and said, "Our Father," he presented in this the embodiment of my text. "If any man sin, we have"—and there he is—"an advocate with our Father" which art in heaven. Every time, therefore, that you say "Our Father," remember it implies the intermediation of our Advocate with Him.

But the second division is, "the propitiation for

our sins." This advocacy is so precious, because based upon a previous fact, namely, his propitiation. "We have an advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation." The advocacy within the veil is contingent, and based upon the propitiation without the gate. You remember the high priest first made atonement outside; then he brought some of the blood into the holy place; and amid much incense he interceded for the tribes of Israel. Our High Priest suffered, says the apostle, without the gate: he then passed into the true holy of holies, and there his advocacy is what John, in the Book of Revelation, called the "much incense" in the golden censer of the angel, or the Angel Lord, the Great High Priest. "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense,"—that is, the advocacy rising from the atonement on Calvary, as the incense ascended from the sacrifice in the ancient economy, that he might offer it in this golden censer: the high priest alone having a golden censer, the other priests having silver ones. That incense, or advocacy, he offers with the prayers of all saints—that is, Christians—giving its perfume, its fragrance, its value, its acceptance, to every prayer that every Christian offers either in heaven or upon earth. Our High Priest, having suffered upon the altar, now stands with the golden censer. Having been our Atonement, he is now our Advocate with the Father. Because he is our Atonement, therefore the expression occurs, "Jesus Christ the *righteous*." Why *righteous*—why is this alluded to? Because it is in virtue of his being the Righteous One,—the Lord our Righteousness—that he stands

before the altar, and advocates our cause, and pleads for us. The word "propitiation" is not a ~~very~~ common word in the Bible, although ~~analogous~~ words are so. The word itself occurs in our English version in three parts:—Romans iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" again, in 1 John iv. 10, "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and also in our text, "He is the propitiation for our sins." It is *λασθηριον*, the word usually applied to the mercy-seat in the Temple and the Tabernacle of old; and it means, that just as that mercy-seat covered the two tables of the Law that were below it, muffling their thunders, and satisfying their exactions; and, secondly, as upon that mercy-seat there was an unearthly glory that was first kindled from heaven, and from which the fire on every altar, and the light in every lamp was kindled,—so is Christ to us. How remarkable, that all the lights and fires of the Temple of Israel were kindled from the celestial flame that was in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and that afterwards settled between the cherubim on the mercy-seat. Christ is our mercy-seat, to which we may go. The vail that kept Israel off from it is now rent. When Christ died, the vail of the temple was rent in twain; and now every Christian, being a priest, has access to the holy of holies, where Christ, our Advocate, is.

This propitiation was his atonement or his sacrifice for our sins. What he did upon the Cross on Calvary is the propitiation—what he does now in heaven is the advocacy that is built upon it. And I may explain still further, by stating that the Hebrew word

applied to "atonement," occurs, I should think, some hundred times in the Old Testament Scripture, corresponding to the Greek word here translated "propitiation." That Hebrew word is *Kaphar*, and what is very singular it is one of those Hebrew words which still occur in our language. We use the word "cover," which is derived from the Hebrew word *Kaphar*. Throughout the Levitical economy, and in the Book of Leviticus, it is the word constantly used for atonement—propitiation. It is employed by the Psalmist, when he says, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are covered,"—that is, atoned for, expiated; and the idea evidently designed to be conveyed is this:—that just as a robe laid over an object conceals it from the outward gaze, so God will deal with them that believe on Jesus, as if all their sins were covered over with the spotless robe of his righteousness, and, in the language that he himself sanctions, he will see no iniquity in Jacob, and no perverseness in Israel. What a beautiful thought, that our sins are covered by the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; so that a Christian shall stand before the judgment-seat, and be holy and happy, because he has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and thus serves him day and night without ceasing!

Because Christ is our advocate with the Father, therefore the propitiation has been completed. You remember that the high priest only passed into the holy place to advocate after he had offered up the victim without; and it was a law, that, whilst the high priest was in the holy of holies pleading, no atonement of any sort must, or dare, be offered up without. What

an extinguisher is this to the view of the Tractarians and Romanists, with respect to the Lord's Supper—that it is a propitiatory sacrifice! Our Advocate is in the holy place pleading; and it is a law of his appointment that no sacrifice must be going on without—that is, upon earth. Then what have we to do? Not to make a sacrifice, but to plead one already made; not to offer an atonement, but to say, "We are satisfied with that atonement that God has given us." What is involved in the awful notion of offering up Christ upon the altar, as it is called, is the terrible thought that Christ is not enough for us; we must make another sacrifice of our own as well. My dear friends, we have a Sacrifice that needs not to be repeated; it was completed when Jesus cried, "It is finished!" and on the force of that he now offers up a ceaseless advocacy beside the throne.

He is the "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." I think those that try to explain this by the supposition that this means, not for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles, utterly misunderstand its meaning. Whatever the meaning be, that cannot be it. First, John was not writing to Jews, but to Christians; after the Jewish economy had ceased, when the Temple had gone, and all its glory had passed away. And, therefore, this is not the explanation of it. My idea is, that John wrote it to rebuke the particularism—if I may so phrase it—the bigotry, the exclusiveness of existing Christian churches, who believed that they had taken the place of the Jews, and that those within their own narrow limits alone could be saved. We believe, that this propitiation is available to the



greatest savage as well as to the most civilized. We do not assert that it is a propitiation accepted by all—this is a very different thing—nor a propitiation that all will accept, nor a propitiation that all will be forgiven by ; but, we do assert that it is a propitiation available to every man, of every degree, and of every stamp ; of every country, and every kindred, and every place upon earth : and if any man does not accept it, it is either because he does not know it, or because he will not accept of it when it is offered to him. We do not believe, as I have said before, that there is any decree driving men to hell. We do not believe in any man being driven to eternal misery in spite of himself. Nay, I do not believe that any man is going to perdition without his knowing it well enough. If I address any that are rejecters of this gospel, they know quite well that they are so—they know that it costs them the greatest trouble to keep down the remonstrances of conscience ; and I am persuaded that it gives a man a great deal more trouble and agony in order to go down to hell than it ever cost a saint to get to glory. How many sermons have you to quench, what reflections have you to keep out, what pangs of conscience have you to get rid of ; what pleasures, what dissipations have you to follow, in order to kill time, that would otherwise be insufferable !

My dear friends, there is a Propitiation, the efficacy of which is sufficient for all—the offer of which is made to all. Why should any man reject it ? Is it something terrible to be a Christian—is it something sepulchral to be a child of God ? I believe that a true Christian can listen to sweet music with greater

ecstasy, can gaze upon the beautiful panoramas of the world with greater delight, can go forth and enjoy the bright morning sun, and retire at evening twilight with greater pleasure, than the man who is living without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world. If to be a Christian meant to go and be a nun or a monk, I could understand people refusing to accept it; this would be natural: but we do not ask you to renounce the world, but to be in it, and to have your hearts above it. A Christian may be a soldier, or he may be a sailor, a merchant, a tradesman, a lawyer, a physician; and the man will best serve his Queen who most loves and serves his God. We may depend upon it that Christianity will make every relationship more beautiful; it will make every duty more lightsome; because, when there is within a heart at peace with God, all nature without will reflect peace and satisfaction on you.

## CHAPTER V.

### PEACE WITH GOD.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—ROMANS v. 1.

You will remember that when I read the first chapter of the Book of Leviticus, descriptive of expiatory sacrifices, I addressed you upon the nature of the offering of Christ, his sacrifice once for all for the sins of them that believe. When we read the second chapter of Leviticus, descriptive of the meat-offerings that were to be presented by Israel, I showed that under our economy our true meat-offering is not what they presented, but ourselves. "We beseech you *by mercies* that ye present," not meat-offerings of corn, and bread, and oil, and wine, but "that ye present *your bodies* living sacrifices, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Having now read of the peace-offering, expressive of peace between God and Israel, I here select a text that is the summary of the chapter—"Therefore being justified by faith," in the expiatory offering finished eighteen centuries ago, we have now, not to *present* a peace-offering, but to taste the sweetness,

the joy, and the satisfaction of peace with God through Christ, the only atonement.

The blessing brought before us is peace, and the way by which it is enjoyed, is also described. This will lead me to show you what is the nature of true peace, in contradistinction to the mockery of it that prevails in the imagination, and sometimes in the convictions, of many.

Almost every chapter in the Bible is eloquent with the blessings of peace. If we look at Christendom, we should think that man came into the world especially desirous to fulfil the prophecy, "I am come not to send peace on the earth, but a sword:" but if we look into this blessed Book we shall see that the direct tendency of every truth, and doctrine, and promise, and precept, is glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will among mankind.

Wherever the tree of life appears in its congenial soil, the rich blossoms of joy, the precious fruits of peace, grow upon its branches over all the world: notwithstanding its storms, its clouds, and its controversies, there is breaking out day by day, in greater fulness, and in richer beauty, the covenant bow—the bow of promise and peace, to all mankind. How often does the Scripture speak of peace! "This man"—speaking of the Saviour—"shall be our peace." How beautiful that text, "Thou, O God, wilt keep in perfect peace the man"—not who is rich or who is great; not who is praised, not who is distinguished by his fellow-men—but "the man that trusteth in thee," or "whose mind is stayed on thee." Again, the Saviour says, "These things have I spoken to you that in me"—whatever you have in the world—"ye may



have peace." And, again, the apostle says, "Our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of *peace*." The very definition of Christianity—its distinctive and emphatic definition—is, "The kingdom of God is not meat, nor drink,"—nor is it clothing, I may add, nor is it Episcopacy, nor Presbyterianism, nor Congregationalism, nor fasting, nor feasting, but it is—oh! that we only felt it more to be so!—"righteousness, peace, joy, in the Holy Ghost." Now men who do not exhibit these graces in their lives, and feel their influence in their hearts,—may be Churchmen—it is easy to be so,—they may be Dissenters—it is easy to be that; but they are not Christians. The distinctive character of a Christian is, that his heart is the throne, and his bosom the home, of righteousness, and peace, and joy; and his life radiates upon the world the grand blessings that he has felt and tasted within him.

Now this text, "Justified by faith we have peace with God," gives us the root of peace, and the way in which it grows, the process by which it is to be implanted or infused into our hearts, and the exclusive and only condition of the obtainment of so great and so precious a blessing. It teaches us that peace grows only on truth. There is no such thing—and it is well for our own safety and comfort we should know it—as peace upon any tree indigenous to the earth; it is only to be gathered from the tree of truth. Truth and peace are both of them most desirable; but if it is necessary that I should part with one of them, then I would rather part with peace than with truth; because if true peace be the blossom, and truth the plant on which it blossoms, if

I part with the plant, next Spring there will be neither truth nor peace; but if I part with the blossom—peace—and leave the plant in the soil, it will hear the sound of the footstep of returning Spring, and, under gentle suns and soft showers, it will bring forth fairer blossoms than it had before. The wisdom from above is first pure—that is, it is truth; then it is peaceable. Better to keep from truthful controversy if we can avoid it; but we should still less indulge in peaceable falsehood; rather we must seek, what is freely offered to us all, peace,—the ceaseless and the fragrant blossom that grows on truth, a living and indestructible plant.

But before submitting to you the nature of this peace, let me notice some of its counterfeits. First, there prevails very widely among mankind what I may call the peace of ignorance—a peace that rises from ignorance, as *miasma* rises from the swamps, or neglected and untrodden deserts of the world. As long as a man is ignorant of the infinite purity of God, of the exactions of his holy and his uncompromising law, and of his own corrupt, fallen, depraved, and guilty nature, so long that man fears nothing, he is therefore troubled by no disquiet—he has, in its perfection, what the prophet calls “peace, peace, when there is no peace at all.” But such peace is the quiet of fallen nature, not the peace of the everlasting Gospel. The first ray of truth will disturb it—the first flash of the great white throne will scatter it like a cloud; and it will be found that he that trusted on such a peace, leaned upon the pointed spear, that pierces to the quick the deepest him that leans upon it hardest. The peace that springs from ignorance is no peace at all. I can only account for the thought-

lessness of the great masses of mankind, with respect to the things that belong to their eternal peace, on the supposition that they are ignorant of the nature of God's law and holy character, and of their own fallen condition at the same time. If these three great facts were vividly impressed upon their hearts, the false peace would instantly be broken, and they would begin to look beyond for the peace that passeth understanding, that a stranger cannot intermeddle with.

But there are some men, in the second place, who have a peace that may be called the peace of formalism—that is to say, they have some slight views of what God is, some vague impressions of what their own guilt is; and, in order to get rid of any disquiet from these impressions of their own ruin, or any forebodings of penalty from God's character, they indulge with more than pharisaic precision in the forms they love, or the formalities of the communion to which they may belong. One repeats prayers nine times a-day; another counts beads; a third goes a long, a painful, and a weary pilgrimage; another goes to church as a duty, another goes to chapel as still more his duty; and another reads chapters of the Bible—it matters not whether it be catalogues of names, as in Numbers, or the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; he derives equal instruction and equal nutriment,—that is, none,—from either. And such persons fancy that when they have thus gone to church, and *said* their prayers, and read their chapter, they have done their duty; and having done their duty, they gather their mantle round them, indulge in the quiet but dreamy notion that now all is well, and they have peace with God. Such peace is absolute

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delusion ; it is *a* peace, but it is not *the* peace ; it is an opiate that deadens the pain, but does not cure the disease ; it is a quiet that will last in sunny and in calm weather, but it will be rent to atoms by the first storm that beats upon it, and the issue be only more disastrous.

There is the peace of self-righteousness. And when I allude to this, do not misunderstand me. The most self-righteous people are not always the most righteous. On the contrary, we shall often find that the man rests most upon his own doings who has fewest doings to rest upon ; and that he is the most self-righteous who has the least personal righteousness to lay any stress upon. It seems a strange phenomenon, though not an unusual one, that the less that one has of moral worth, the more he seems to make of what he has ; so that no man is looking more intensely for heaven in virtue of his own deserving than he who has very little to lean on, either in heaven or on earth. You fancy, first of all, that God is not so severe ; and the language of Satan to Adam is echoed in your bosom—"Hath God said"—he knows it is all sham, it is all pretence ; you will not die, why should you be alarmed ? God is not so severe ; is his law so strict ? He will let it down to my convenience ; he will connive at my sins. My dear friends, if that were God's character I could have no confidence in him at all ; no confidence in the decree that condemns sin, no confidence in the law that will not inflict its penalties as well as give its rewards ; and if you could show me that your notion of God is a just one, my whole confidence in his government, in his law, in his promises,

in his words, would be literally gone for ever. But he will stand through everlasting ages to the aphorism he has substantially repeated in almost every page in the Bible—"The soul that sins shall die;" and he will stand eternally to the glorious truth that follows it—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." God will not dilute his law in order to save a world; he spared not his own Son in order to deliver a single soul. The peace that springs from self-righteousness, I have said, is an extremely subtle, but a no less false and destructive one. I have seen persons rejoicing in their attainments, believing that this is the evidence of grace; and I have seen others sorrowing that they had no attainments, and thinking this was the evidence of grace. Now the fact is, self-righteousness can laugh and sing when it exults in what it is, and self-righteousness can weep and cry that it has not something to exult in, or in which it can glory. So you will hear other persons say, "I am not satisfied with my faith; I fear I have very little faith; and I am not at all satisfied that my faith is true." My dear brother, if you were satisfied with your faith, that would be the very worst sign that your character develops. The question is not, are you satisfied with your faith; or satisfied with your attainments; but are you satisfied with Christ the Saviour? This is not the dispensation of "Well done, thou good and faithful servant;" this is the dispensation of struggle, of fear, of perplexity, often of grief; hereafter will be the time, for "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Another person will say, and think it is the evidence of the highest grace, "I do not grieve over

my sins as I ought." If you did grieve over your sins as you ought, you would be so delighted with yourself that you would trust in that very grief as the ground of your acceptance before God. What we are to glory in, what we are to be satisfied with—the richest glory that embosoms a ransomed and redeemed saint, is Christ alone, all our righteousness, all our salvation, and all our desire.

There is another peace which I must allude to—the peace that springs from feeling. You say, "I was at the communion table, and I felt so calm; I have prayed, and I have felt so much delight in it; I have read the Bible, and I have felt so much joy." Well, all this is right; these are proper feelings: but if you say, "Therefore I have peace," then you are turning holy feelings into grounds of trust and confidence. Our peace is to come, not from what we feel, nor from our tears, nor our smiles, nor from our experience, but from our being justified by faith in Christ Jesus; and therefore only we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The true peace that springs from the source I have pointed out—and the only source—has certain characteristics also. I may just notice here, as a preliminary remark, that you will find that a ripened saint, when he comes to a dying hour, looks less at what he is, and what he has done, and what he has been, than a very young or inexperienced Christian; because he has that clear view of the only Fountain of peace that he dare go nowhere else.

Rutherford, the celebrated Professor of Glasgow University,—whose letters are so beautiful, and whose piety and learning were so great,—when he came to

his death-bed, was asked what he could rely on; and he said, "There is but one text in the Bible"—and recollect that this was a man illustrious for his spirituality: his life, his treasure, his heart was in heaven—"There is but one text in the Bible that I dare lay stress on; and, blessed be God! that text is so strong that I can trust mine eternal life on it—'Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.' " Justified by faith, Rutherford had thus peace with God through Jesus Christ.

But there is a true peace. What are the characteristics of it? First, the peace that springs from justification by faith in Christ is a purely spiritual peace. I mean by this, it is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Now to know whether any grace you have be really a divine and a true one, you may determine by this criterion:—Whatever peace, or joy, or any other emotion in our heart does not reflect Christ, and point to Christ as its author, and cast upon him all the glory of it, is not a true Christian grace. If it be implanted by the Holy Spirit, what will be its tendency? "The Spirit shall take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you;" and thus will glorify, not you, but Him. If, therefore, your peace be sacred, and the Holy Spirit be its author, the necessary result of that peace in your heart will be,—“I give all the praise, not to my prayers, not to my reading, not to my discharge of duty, not to my suffering evil for Christ's sake; but as this peace is from Christ, to him I give the glory. It is a leaf from the tree of life, and he has all the praise, and he shall have all the honour.” This is the evidence of true peace.

The peace of a Christian is an intelligent peace. It is not, as some people tell us, fanaticism, extravagance. It is not feeling separated from the Bible, or rambling impulse; it is connected with a Divine source. When the Holy Spirit implants peace in a Christian's heart, he does it in connexion with his own Word. Any feeling that you have disunited from the Bible you ought to doubt the origin and nature of. The Spirit teaches the Bible—honours the Bible; and whatever seems a grace in your heart, disunited from the outward inspired Word, you may doubt its origin, you may suspect its nature. But this peace is implanted by the Spirit through the knowledge of Him whom the Bible reveals—Christ crucified.

This peace, the true spiritual peace of the Christian, is perfect, complete. He is kept in perfect peace. But the most experienced Christian will say, "I have not always peace. How can it be perfect peace?" I answer, Its ebbs and its flows are not changes in the peace, but the failing and the faltering of your grasp of it. The peace is perfect, but we possess it steadfast in our hearts in the ratio of the tenacity of our faith; and when we have not perfect peace, it is not that Divine peace has failed, but that the faith that holds it on our part has faltered. God's peace is in itself absolutely perfect; but it is in our experience relatively imperfect. But when our peace is disturbed, our joys diluted, our sunshine clouded, we are not to say, "God's mercies have failed," but, My faith has faltered; and, "therefore, I have not the full enjoyment of what I otherwise should have."

This peace, as possessed by a Christian, is independent of all outward things. A Christian meets with

storm, and rain, and wind, and tempest, just like the rest of mankind. He has sickness in his frame, sorrows and ills in his home, bereavements in his family, like the rest of the world. The world draws its peace from things that are around it; therefore, when these things fail, its peace goes;—but a Christian draws his peace, not from things that are around him, but from the Fountain of peace that is above him; and, therefore, when the fig-tree ceases to give fruit, when there is no herd in the stall, when the vine yields no blossom, the Christian's source of peace remains inexhaustibly the same: he rejoices in the Lord, and joys in the God of his salvation. Draw your happiness from outward things, and you will find it the most precarious possession in the world; trust in your wealth, draw your peace from your home, your family, your friends—from any earthly cistern, and you stand in jeopardy every hour: but let your peace, your joy, your happiness, flow from the great Fountain that never fails, and then, though the earth be removed, though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, though the waves thereof do roar, and though the hills shake with the swelling thereof, you have a river, whose streams ceaselessly flowing make glad the city of our God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, therefore she shall not be moved. The Christian's peace is an inner grace, drawn from a heavenly source, unaffected by outer things, and, therefore, it ebbs not and flows not with them. The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of peace is quietness for ever.

A Christian's peace is permanent; it lasts for ever.

It is not overthrown by the things that shake the foundations of the world's peace. If subtle casuistry carps at his Bible, if powerful objections are launched against its distinctive tenets, if difficulties in the way of the acceptance of the truth are brought before him that he cannot solve, a Christian does not say, Therefore my hope, my peace, my joy, are all gone; but I am persuaded from the past that what I do know in the Bible is divine; and I am sure it will come out in the future, that what I do not know there is no less so: and he, therefore, waits until that time when what he knows not now he shall know hereafter. Many true Christians I have met with live in fear of some scientific discovery, or in alarm at some infidel objection, or in amazement at some new phenomenon; and foolishly enough they begin, not to doubt their own weakness, but to question their religion. Now, if you have a true apprehension of God's word, you will not be moved, whatever obstacles may be in the way of it. You must not think because you cannot answer an objection to the Bible that the objection is therefore unanswerable. A very important thought to be carried with us is, Because I cannot answer this objection it does not follow that it never has been answered, or that it cannot be answered. On the contrary, if you will wait a little, you will find that all things that seem to be obstructions to the truth, are becoming part and parcel of its glorious channel; and all those things that seem to be difficulties in the way of its acceptance, incapable of removal, are melted daily into its majestic current; and, from the depths of earth, and from the heights of

heaven, from all sciences, and all literature, and all researches, there is emerging every day, with more eloquent emphasis, "Thy word, O God, is truth." Let not, therefore, your peace be disturbed by objections or difficulties that you cannot now solve, but which have been solved, or can be solved, and will be solved hereafter. The peace of a Christian is permanent. It survives all—it outlives all; it grows like the oak, only stronger and more deeply rooted by the storms that beat upon it, until it is transplanted into that better rest where there is no more storm, nor trial.

Having seen, first, the brands of spurious peace, and, secondly, the characteristics of true and Christian peace, let me now allude, in the third place, to the ground of true peace—namely, "justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." To be justified, means simply to be acquitted. The apostle has explained it in previous chapters. To be justified, means to be acquitted from the consequences of the ill we have done, and to be admitted to the blessings and the happiness which, by our conduct, we have forfeited. "Justified by faith," says the apostle, "we have peace with God." But how justified? Jesus became our representative. I do not stop to explain how natural, or reasonable, or probable this is. It is the fact. Jesus became our representative; he omitted nothing that we owed—he committed nothing that was sinful. He bore our sins on his own body—paid and exhausted the penalty. He earned back the heaven we had lost by his righteousness, and, believing on him, we are justified. Adam sinned; we, his children, share in his guilt, and



are delivered to its consequences. Jesus bore Adam's sin; and all the children of Adam that will flee to Christ, the second Adam, escape the consequences of that sin. Adam forfeited heaven by his want of original righteousness; and we, Adam's children, have forfeited heaven also. Jesus regained heaven, by obeying the law that Adam could not obey; and we, the children of the second Adam, believers in Christ, have restored to us the heaven we had forfeited for ever. Thus, justified by what Christ has done for us, not by anything done in us, we have, says the apostle, peace with God through Jesus Christ.

But he states here that we are justified by faith. What is meant by being justified by faith? It is this. Faith, the distinctive grace of the Christian, lays hold upon that which Christ has done, and thus we are justified. The ground of my pardon at the judgment-seat is not faith, any more than it is works. I am not justified now by orthodoxy of belief, any more than I am justified by perfection of good works or good living. The old formula was, "Do and live;" the formula now is, not "Believe and live," as if belief took the place of doing, and life were the consequence of either, but it is, "Do and live," and that formula is still obligatory. "Do and live;" only when Adam heard it, he had to do the work, that he might get the wages. When Adam's lost family hear it, they have to receive the required righteousness already done by Christ for them, and thus they get the wages; but, in either case, God demands a perfect righteousness, or conformity to his holy law, before he will give heaven to anybody. In Adam's case it was, "Do it

personally, and you will obtain it personally." In our case it is done for us, and, because done for us, not by us, we obtain the everlasting rest that remaineth for the people of God. The greatest faith is not a great salvation, and the least faith is not a little salvation. The greatest faith, that can remove mountains, has no more salvation than we need; and the least faith, that trembles on the verge of extinction, has no less salvation than we actually require. Faith, however, is not the bread; it is rather the mouth that eats it. It is not the brass serpent, but the eye that looks at it. When a poor beggar gets alms, it is not his hand that he thanks, but the donor; and when we exercise faith, or, in more common language, trust, or confidence in God, we exercise a grace that God gives;—for that faith is not our own, it is the gift of God; and we are saved, not by belief, but by what belief clings to—Christ's finished sacrifice. It is very important to understand this, because the world objects to evangelical religion, alleging that all that you want for heaven is a correct creed; and the worldling, unenlightened, looks for heaven, thinking all that he needs is a tolerably consistent life; whereas faith is not illumination in the head, it is not even law in the conscience, it is not even love in the heart, but the trust of the whole man on Christ, our only title to heaven, the King that governs us by the law in his own word; the prophet, that teaches us the way, the truth, and the life.

Is it true that we were at war with God? Many a benevolent and amiable man shrinks in horror from the idea that he ever was at war with God; but it is true of the most amiable as well as of the most wicked.

The natural heart, before it is regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, is not only hostile to God, but it is enmity to God. The precise occurrence in providence may never have overtaken you that shall develop this latent enmity ; but God says it is there, and whether you feel it or not, you may depend upon it that it is so. Now then, he says, when we are justified by faith, persons that were at war with God shall have peace with him. But, how have we peace with God? We find that instead of asking us to make an atonement which we never can, he invites us now to accept pardon of all the sins that are past. We find now that God is not a God hating us, hostile to us, ready to destroy us, as the natural man thinks ; but a God so loving us, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life. Now, the natural man's conviction, and I appeal to your own experience, is, that God is an angry being. Your notion of religion, the first notion you had, was that it was a very awful thing ; the Bible, a very gloomy thing ; and that the minister of the gospel was only fit to precede the dead to the grave. The notion that you were taught in the nursery, and that has grown up with you to manhood, is, that religion is a gloomy thing. And hence, the man whose countenance has glowed with joy when he spoke of his family, of his politics, of his wealth, of the world, falls into another key when the subject that comes up is religion. Why this? My dear friends, if there be a joyful thing upon earth, it is religion. If there be a ground of thankfulness upon earth, it is the Bible. If there be a topic about which the heart should bound while it feels—if there be a subject which should be

spoken of in strains of praise, not in sepulchral and gloomy tones, it is religion. For what is it? God is my Father, heaven is my everlasting home; Christ, the Saviour of souls, is my Brother, my Priest, my King, my Prophet, my all; God, instead of waiting to destroy me, waits to bless me; instead of keeping me off, he bids me draw near; instead of my father's house having preparations to punish me, the prodigal, it has preparations for a joyous festival, because the lost is found, the dead is alive, the prodigal is come to himself, to his Father, and to his God. Therefore, being justified by the belief, by the faith, by the knowledge of this, I have peace with God. I have peace with God in his holy law. The moment I find that Christ obeyed it, that he bore the curse, and exhausted the penalty, I do not say any more, as the worldly man says, God's law is too severe; his exactions are too great; we never can do what he requires: I discover that God's law is holy, and just, and good, and true; and I am satisfied with its severest exactions, because I find that Christ has fulfilled it, and made it honourable for me.

I have peace with God as he is revealed in creation. The natural man thinks that the world now is just as God made it. This world is not now as God made it. No doubt the traces of his hand, the footprints of his presence, are many and beautiful; but the marks of irruptive and destructive elements are irresistibly plain on every side. God did not introduce autumn, decay, winter, plague, pestilence, war, famine, death. These are not God's children. God surely did not pronounce these to be very good, when he had finished this beautiful orb. You say, Why did he

permit them? That I cannot answer; but that he did not make them, and send them originally when he made the world, that the Bible does answer. But when the natural man looks at this world, thus covered with the traces of wrath, of sin, of disease, and of death, he becomes vexed and irritated. It is inexplicable to him; he cannot understand it, and comes naturally to the conclusion that the God that made it is a wrathful being. But when I discover Christ, the Saviour, the gift of His love; when I discover that the earth was made by God, holy, beautiful, and good; that God raised a cross upon it, and sent his Son to die there in order to restore it; and that my sin, not the fiat of God, introduced our woe, our diseases, our calamities, and our miseries, justified through Christ Jesus, my atonement, my righteousness, my all, I have peace with God, as he speaks from Sinai—peace with God as he rides upon the whirlwind or treads upon the sea—peace with God in creation, and in revelation also. I have also peace with God in all his providential dealings. The natural man, for instance, loses the property to-day he had accumulated by the labour of twenty years. If he sees God at all in the loss, he repines, and murmurs against him. The parent loses the babe that she loves, or the home is deprived of its chiefest ornament and glory. In that home there are loud, repining, murmuring complaints against the severity of God, who has nipped the blossom before it was blown, or blasted it after it was so. But a Christian reasons thus:—Not, God hates me because he has sent this suffering; but God is my Father, therefore this suffering must be working out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The natural

man reasons, from what he suffers, upward to what God is. The Christian man reasons from what God is, down to the character of what he suffers. The natural man says, I am sick, I am poor, I am pained, I am dying, therefore God hates me. The Christian says, God is my Father, therefore sickness is chastisement, not punishment; losses and cares are not penal, but paternal; and all these things, because God is my Father, are working for good to me, his child.

I have peace with all mankind. The Christian pities the sins, prays for the souls, of those that are around him. He rejoices in their excellencies, and prays for their increase, in those that are Christians, along with himself. As much as lieth in him, he lives peaceably with all men.

Have we any experience of this peace? Have we got rid of the false peaces that, like opiates, lull, but do not remove the pain; and are we introduced into the true peace, the lustre of the shining star, that sets not for ever and ever? Are we deriving the peace that we feel in the prospect of death, in the prospect of a judgment-seat, in the prospect of the troubles that are coming in the world, not from something that we are, or anything we have done, but only from this—that Christ is our only Saviour, and that we are his redeemed and ransomed ones? If you have not this peace, pray for it. There is not a blessing that God refuses to prayer, and there is not a blessing that he has promised to give without it. I cannot explain why prayer should move the Arm that moves the universe. I only know that it is his ordinance; and his promise that if we ask the greatest things through Christ, we

shall obtain them. Pray, then, that he would justify you freely by his grace, that he would enable you to trust implicitly on the Saviour; and, so justified, and so trusting, to have that peace that passeth understanding, that will keep the heart and mind continually, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GROUND OF JOY.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

ROMANS v. 11.

You must have noticed that, in the fourth chapter of Leviticus, there occurs frequently the expression, "to make an atonement," with the victim or the sacrifice that is offered by the priest on behalf of the sinner. For instance, in the twentieth verse, we read that the priest shall take it, "and make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them." Again, in the thirty-first verse, "And the priest shall burn it upon the altar, for a sweet savour unto the Lord: and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." And in the last verse of the same chapter, "The priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him." You see, then, constantly repeated throughout this chapter, at the close of every sacrifice, offered according to the requirement of God, that the object of that offering or sacrifice was to make an atonement for sin, or, as it is otherwise rendered, an atonement for the sinner.

All this, as I have said before, was purely typical.



There is nothing in the sacrifice of a lamb or a bullock expiatory or atoning, any more than in the presenting of a few flowers, or the burning of a little incense. It was, however, the mode instituted by God to foreshadow, and to lead the beholder, in Levitical days, to the Atonement which should be made at the end of that dispensation, and it, having been finished on the cross, and having made an end of sin, we now can say, what the Jew could not say in the days of Levi, "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received that which was typified by all the atonements of Aaron, and which gave to those atonements their vitality and their virtue—the atonement made, once for all, for the sins of all that believe."

This word, "atonement," does not occur very frequently in the New Testament; it is often rendered by the expression, perfectly parallel in meaning, but different in form, sometimes translated "reconciliation." It is defined and well expressed by an apostle, the author of the Epistle to the Romans, who says, in 2 Corinthians v. 19, "to wit," explaining the atonement, telling you what it is, "to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"—making the atonement for them—"not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," or the message of the atonement. "Now, then," says the apostle, "we are"—what the priests of Levi were not, in a more full and precious sense—"ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"—that means, receive ye the

atonement; for he says—this is the explanation of it—God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, to bear our sins on his own body on the tree, that we might be made the righteousness of God by him. Thus we see the apostle explaining, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, the meaning of the expression, “atonement,” as used in his Epistle to the Romans. The original has been rendered by some into English, by the word supposed best to express its real meaning—AT-ONE-MENT, because it makes those who were at issue to be at one. They think that the word, instead of being pronounced by us “atonement,” ought to be more properly pronounced, “at-one-ment,” being that great truth which brings into unity those that sin had rent and severed for ever, and without which an earth all sin, and a God all holiness, never could have met—the one receiving glory, and the other receiving happiness.

The idea implied in the Atonement is, that there was separation between us and God that needed to be put an end to. This fact is expressed most plainly by God himself, when he says, “Your sins have separated between you and me.” Sin is essentially the rending element in the universe. It once split earth from heaven, and would keep it away from heaven for ever if it were not in love, and mercy, and grace, that Christ reunites the broken-off earth to the great continent of glory, of which it once formed a part, and from which sin, and sin alone, has rent and separated it. But, thus separated from God, we are brought to be at one by the Atonement. Man, however, could not make the atonement. He was the guilty party, without strength as well as without title and without

character; and God, therefore, the offended party, who was under no obligation to do it, but merely from love and mercy, interposed a Great Sacrifice, by which we might be reinstated without doing injury to his law, his character, and his government. "Him hath God set forth to be the atonement, or the propitiation for our sins." He gave Christ, as an expression of his love, a satisfaction to his justice, and an atonement for our sins. And now, therefore, God, consistently with all he has said, and ever will say, and consistently with all he is, and must ever continue to be, can let forth upon the guilty those expressions of his love which belonged only to the pure, the unfallen, and the holy; and receive sinners to his bosom, showing, in his reception of the sinner, at once his hatred to the sin and his love to the man, and covered with a richer glory when he does so, than if this earth had been cast into hell, and all its inhabitants destroyed for ever.

This atonement is called by the apostle here *the* atonement; in contradistinction to the numerous atonements made typically by Levi. We have received now, not an atonement needing to be repeated to-day and to-morrow, and incapable of taking away sin, because if it should do that it would not need to be repeated; nor does it teach that we have to make an atonement, or can make it;—we receive what has been already made, perfect, complete, available for ever—the once-for-all sacrifice or atonement made for sins. In other words, the atonement predicted by prophets, promised by God, foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and the Temple, anticipated by pious patriarchs, proclaimed by John the Baptist,

recorded by evangelists, preached by apostles, believed in by all true Christians, is the very life, and substance, and central truth of the Christian economy.

This atonement, it is said here, we have received. How have we received it? What does the apostle mean by that expression? The best and most precious medicine is of no value in disease unless it be taken as prescribed; the crown of a kingdom is worthless to me unless it be put in my possession; and the atonement may reconcile earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, but if I be not interested in it, for all practical purposes it is to me as if it never had been made, except that it may aggravate my condemnation that it was offered to me, and I refused and rejected it. Receiving the atonement is just believing what God says about it—laying the stress and trust of the soul, in its hopes of heaven and expectancy of glory, upon it; pleading with God, that we know he loves us, that he delights in mercy, and that now there is provided by his love, what was devised by his wisdom, a grand fact, a great economy—the atonement, by which he can be a just God, while he justifies the sinner, and spare me in spite of my sins, in accordance with his law, showing at once his reverence for law, and for his own glory also, when he forgives and pardons me, a sinner. To receive the atonement is, therefore, not to bring something to it, but to accept it as a ground on which God can forgive; to accept the delineation of it in the Bible as a truth that God has taught, and to deal with God, sinners though we be, as if we had what in Christ we do have, welcome access into his presence, notwithstanding our sins, and pardon for them whilst we obtain access to him, and confess their

nature, their aggravation, and their guilt. This is the whole secret of salvation—to treat God's word as truth, to act upon it, to take it as reality, to venture into the valley of the shadow of death, with no other trust but this, with no other hope but this, with no other plea at a judgment-seat but this, with no other hope of admission into heaven except what springs from this,—that Christ is the great Saviour, and I, the chiefest of sinners, can look to him, and lean on him as *my* Saviour. Thus we receive the atonement.

Now, says the apostle, the result of our receiving—that is, believing or trusting in the atonement made by Christ once for all, the antitype of all those recorded in Leviticus—is, that we joy in God. Have you ever noticed how frequently joy is spoken of in the Bible, not as the incidental possession of one, two, or three distinguished Christians, but as the ordinary level of Christian life and character? For instance, we read, “We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Again, “The God of all peace fill you with all joy in believing.” “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” “Ye shall go out with joy.” “These things have I spoken unto you, that your joy may be full.” The apostle says, “Rejoice; and again I say, rejoice.” If we look to the precedents of illustrious Christians, we find joy to have been not their occasional but almost their ordinary possession. Anna said, “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord;” David said, “My soul shall rejoice in God;” Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, and leaped for joy; and the early Christians had such joy in their hearts that they took even joyfully the spoiling of their goods. And an apostle felt it to be so real, that he said, “Count it all joy when ye

fall into divers afflictions and tribulations." So that if the Bible describes what is really Christian character, if it be a portrait of Christian experience, there ought to be more joy in Christian hearts than generally is found there, more happiness in Christian experience than is often the case. The apostle does not say, we *may* rejoice, or occasionally we have rejoiced; but he lays it down as if it were the ordinary tone and feeling—"We joy in God through Christ Jesus, through whom we have received the atonement." The joy of the world is extremely evanescent, because it is fed from incidental, perishable and unsatisfactory things. The brightest joy that this world has, like Jonah's gourd, springs up in a night, and in a night it dies. It is an incidental, occasional, and always a perishable thing. I do not say it is sinful to rejoice in our friends, in our acquaintance, in our health, in our prosperity, in a beautiful day, in the bright sunshine, in the country, on the sea side; there is a joy that springs from these things perfectly moral, and therefore in its place truly proper. But there is a joy richer than all, which ought and which must supersede all,—the joy that we have in God through Jesus Christ, from what God is, from what he has given, from what he has promised, and from what we may expect when we enter into the joy of our Lord, and are admitted to his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Hence the joy of a Christian, described here by the apostle, is abundant. Our Lord says that he has taught us, and spoken to us, that our joy may be full. The joy of a Christian is heartfelt joy. It is not the joy of the senses, or the *imagination*, or the eye, or the ear, which is all that

can be said of natural joy; but it is the joy of the heart;—your hearts shall rejoice. And it is a joy, too, so deep and real, that, unlike earthly joys, it is not dependent on any shape or sense. If our water is drawn from a spring, that water is abundant or it fails according as the spring is; but when it is drawn from an inexhaustible source, it lasts for ever. The joys of this world evaporate, and are dried up when they are most wanted; but the joy of a Christian is very much like one of the springs that are found amid the Alpine glaciers—they are not frozen in winter; and in summer, when other springs are dried up, they flow fastest and yield the most abundant supply. So the Christian's joy, drawn from an inexhaustible source, is permanent, and outlives those things that extinguish the natural man's joy. Hence that beautiful passage, never too often quoted,—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” In other words, the prophet says, in a darker and cloudier dispensation, that the joy that he had was so deep, so cordial, so little dependent upon earthly springs, that when all those springs shall be dried up, and everything that he has shall disappear, he shall have left that which the world cannot take, as it could not give,—joy in the God of his salvation. The Psalmist said very beautifully,—“Oh send forth thy light and thy truth. Then will I go to the altar of God.” If he had stopped there, he would have been a mere ceremonialist, a tractarian, or a Romanist; but he

adds,—“I will go to the altar of God—to God my exceeding joy”—the altar, a step towards Him who was the end of the altar in that dispensation. A Christian joys, then, in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He joys in the Father, because he is his Father; we joy in Christ Jesus, says the apostle, as our Saviour; and we joy in the Holy Ghost, for the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We joy in his love that has come forth on its holy and beautiful embassy to save us; we joy in his holiness and justice, which, instead of being against us, as they would have been, if there had been no atonement, are now for us; for he is faithful and just to forgive us through Christ, the atonement. We joy in God’s providential government, because we feel that our Father not only made all, but rules all. And, whatever, therefore, betides a Christian, he believes to be a missionary from God; and that all things, however they feel or look at the moment, really and truly are working for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

Thus a Christian joys in God’s character, as revealed in Christ; he joys in God’s providential government, feeling that nothing can separate him from God, and that all things, under God’s touch and impulse, work for his good, and directly, or indirectly, prove to us mercy, blessings, and benefits. He rejoices in God also, not only from what God is, but also from what God has done and will do. Because our sins are pardoned, for we have remission through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin, we joy in God, *through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the*



atonement. We joy in God, through Christ's atonement, because thereby the Holy Spirit is given to every true Christian to enlighten him, to sanctify him, to comfort him, and so to apply to his heart the joy of God, that that joy shall be to him actual.

We joy in God, through Christ's Atonement, because thereby death is destroyed; the sting of death is taken away. In a Christian's case death does not cease to have being; the soul of a believer parts from its earthly tenement just as does the soul of an unbeliever; but you know that the same outward fact may have very different aspects to different persons. The pillar of cloud and of fire, when it seemed all brightness to Israel, was all blackness to Egypt that was behind: and so death may be all blackness to the unconverted man, and yet all brightness to the Christian. The same outward fact, therefore, may present itself in different aspects to different men, according to the character and spiritual condition of these in the sight of a holy God. Now, to a Christian, death has lost his bitterest element. There is the pain of sickness, there is the agony of dying; but, in a Christian's conviction and experience, there is not in death the sting, because sin is pardoned and put away; and death, therefore, is but the uncoiling and the unwinding of life, the summons to the soul to leave its tenement of clay, and move to everlasting refreshment; to his body the repose in the dust till the resurrection morn, to his soul instant and blessed entrance into glory.

And we joy in God, through Christ's atonement, because thereby the way to heaven is revealed to us, —the future is also revealed to us. Eternity is not

now an undiscovered and an unknown land. If it were so, we should dread it. Man is prone to fear what he does not know. The thorough knowledge of a thing is almost alone sufficient to dissipate fear. Let the disease that attacks you, let the epidemic that overtakes you, be dreadful in its character as it may—the thorough comprehension of it is the dispersion of all fear about it. So, in reference to eternity; as long as it is an unknown land, so long it is fearful; but, when it is thrown open, irradiated by the Sun of Righteousness—when we see the land, that is afar off, lying in the light of the King whom we see in his beauty, to use the words of Isaiah, our fears are scattered, we perceive that it is our home, that our Elder Brother is there, that our nearest relatives wait to welcome us, and we strike the tent in the desert, and take our march to the better land, not as to a strange place and a foreign people, but to our home, where our Father, our friends, and our brethren are.

And lastly, we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, because we not only know what heaven is, but also the way to it. If any one should say, with Thomas of old, “Lord, show us the way,”—we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?—the answer to such is just what it was to Thomas; and it ought to be as entire satisfaction to us as it was to him—“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” By that atonement we have opened up to us that way; and, therefore, an apostle says, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,”—that is, the atonement—“by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us

through the vail,"—which he hath rent, and so laid open a heavenly and a better land,—“which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh. And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” Let us “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

Let us, therefore, regard Christianity not as a religion of gloom, but of joy; not as sepulchral in its aspect, and sorrowful in its tones, but as bright, radiant, full of hope, fitted to cheer, to animate, and to delight. The clouds of despair and darkness may still rest around Mount Sinai, but about the Cross all is brightness, because all is peace. Therefore, “we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” And, if we ourselves have received it, we have tasted something of its joy, though we may constitutionally differ from each other. One man is more susceptible, more sensitive than another. One can weep when another cannot; we have different constitutional sympathies: yet if our joy be not an overflowing passion, it will be a steadfast, permanent principle. If it be not, as it is in some, bright sunshine, it will be, at least, plain daylight. If we be Christians, we must have some experience of, and some acquaintance with, that joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. If we have received this joy, let us seek to spread it. It is the law of good news that we cannot keep it to ourselves; if it be that which will benefit others, by a law of our nature we shall make it known. Have we learned

that there is an Atonement, that we may receive—not pay for, or toil for, but receive? Are we resting on it? If we are not, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, so freely offered, so available to all? If we have received it, let us tell others of it, directly or indirectly—by word, or by tract, or by Bible, or by life—in any way we like: but let us try, according to our means, or measure, or talent, or temperament, to let others know that Christianity is our happiness on earth, and the dawn, even before time closes, of that full joy which shines without a cloud, and without suspension, in the better land for ever and ever.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CHRISTIAN OFFERING.

"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—ROMANS xii. 1.

WE have seen, in the second chapter of Leviticus which we have read, the prescribed offerings that were to follow the propitiatory sacrifices. We have seen that these, in some degree, represented and set forth the spiritual and eucharistic sacrifices that all believers are to make. We have in this verse, in the prescriptions of the apostle, a definition and description of those sacrifices, as first and chiefest, the living man, surrendered to God that made and redeemed him, a living sacrifice, rational, intelligent, and spiritual; and this proclaimed to be now, in opposition to the offerings once given, an acceptable service to God.

You will notice, first of all, that the apostle does not enjoin this by the force of apostolical authority. He might have said, "I command you to do so;" he might have said, "Present your bodies;" but he does not do so. Every sacrifice, as we shall see by-and-by, must be voluntary. He therefore beseeches not commands,—"I beseech you by the mercies of God."

He speaks as a father to his children, as a friend to his friends, as a teacher to his pupils; ever feeling, what we need also to feel, that never is authority so impressive as when clothed in love; and never does a command so deeply strike the heart as when it comes from a heart that truly loves.

He beseeches them, not by the authority of Christ, though he might have done so; but "by the mercies of God." He takes his stand, not on Sinai, but on Calvary; he makes the fulcrum of his appeal not legal, but evangelical ground. He who thinks that God is an ever-exacting Master, will give him reluctant and very imperfect service; but he who looks upon God as exacting nothing, but giving all, will present to him his body a living sacrifice, his reasonable and his acceptable service. Think less of God as commanding, more of God as bestowing; and by a law that has its explanation in our nature, you will serve him most. It is not a slave that hears a tyrant commanding that gives him his best service; it is a son that listens to a father's request that yields the most beneficent and joyous offering.

But, it may be asked, what are these mercies? It is a singular fact, that the Hebrew word rendered so generally "mercy," has usually no singular number—it is generally in the plural; as if one could not have one mercy without having innumerable mercies in its train. But what is mercy? It is love in contact with sin. If there had been no sin, we never had known what mercy is. Love lights upon the unfallen; love, refracted into mercy, lights upon those who are the victims of sin. And how shall we enumerate God's mercies? Pardoning mercies, sanctifying mercies, pre-

serving mercies, comforting mercies, redeeming mercies : mercies in creation, mercies in providence, mercies in redemption. Who does not feel that all his paths, from infancy till now, have been paved with mercies; that the bitterest cup he has drank, in his bitterest moments, had in it sweeter mercies than he ever deserved? Our mercies, if we had eyes to see, are like the stars of the sky in their number and in their brilliancy; like the flowers of the earth in their fragrance and their beauty; unexpected, often unasked, always and everywhere undeserved. That man is blind that cannot see his mercies; he is insensible, indeed, who does not feel them; and he will not be a long possessor of them, or long enjoy them, who does not give to God what he deserves—a tribute of thanksgiving and praise for his possession of them. I know not a more beautiful recapitulation of mercies than the very first hymn that we have often sung:—

“ When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys;  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.

“ Oh! how shall words, with equal warmth,  
My gratitude declare;  
That glows within my ravish'd heart!  
But Thou canst read it there.

“ Thy providence my life sustain'd,  
And all my wants redress'd;  
When in the silent womb I lay,  
And hung upon the breast.

“ To all my weak complaints and cries,  
Thy mercy lent an ear,

Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learn'd  
To form themselves in prayer.

"Unnumber'd comforts to my soul  
Thy tender care bestow'd,  
Before my infant heart conceived  
From whom those comforts flow'd.

"When in the slippery paths of youth,  
With heedless steps, I ran;  
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,  
And led me up to man.

"Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,  
It gently clear'd my way;  
And through the pleasing snares of vice,  
More to be fear'd than they.

"When worn with sickness, oft hast thou  
With health renew'd my face;  
And, when in sins and sorrows sunk,  
Reviv'd my soul with grace.

"Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss  
Hath made my cup run o'er;  
And, in a kind and faithful friend,  
Hath doubled all my store.

"Ten thousand thousand precious gifts  
My daily thanks employ;  
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,  
That tastes these gifts with joy."

"I beseech you, therefore, by these, the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

But not only does Paul allude to the mercies of God, but he uses also a preposition of great significance. He says: "I beseech you, *therefore*." "*Therefore*" is illative, or inferential: it denotes something that he had said before, on the ground of which he *urges this duty*. So that my text is what mathema-



ticians call "a corollary," drawn from a theorem, or a proposition previously established. But what has he been establishing here? He has been laying down all the doctrines of grace; and he argues that, because these truths are revealed and inspired by God, therefore, instead of living in disregard of all the moral duties of the law, you are constrained, by an impulse the more powerful, because it is grace, to present your bodies living sacrifices to God. What are the truths that Paul has previously established, not only with irresistible reasoning, but under the inspiration of the Spirit of God? In a previous part he has shown, that there is no condemnation in heaven or in earth, from law or Gospel, to them that are in Christ Jesus. He has shown, in the next place, that the righteousness of Christ is unto all, and upon all that believe; their only justification in God's sight. He has shown, in the next place, the election of God; that it is not of him that walketh, or of him that runneth, but of God. The previous chapter—the eleventh—of the Epistle to the Romans, is the strongest declaration of what we call the doctrine of election—what is sometimes called divine predestination, but which really is, when explained, what it is called more frequently in the Bible, the doctrine of grace, of sovereign grace. The common notion of persons that do not know the Gospel, is that God has predestinated some men to eternal hell, and other men to eternal heaven. That is not the language of the Bible. I have stated before my belief that God has predestinated nobody to hell. I do not believe that God drives any man to hell; I believe, on the contrary, that God has so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him may not perish, but have eternal life ; and if any are lost in everlasting ruin, the reason of their loss is not in God, but wholly in themselves. I have often quoted the passage, and it is one that needs to be often quoted, because important :—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom"—*inherit*, relationship—"the kingdom prepared for *you*"—prepared for you—"from the foundation of the world." But how different is his language to the lost: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting"—not "Depart from me, *inherit*," but "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"—not meant for you, not designed for you, not got ready for you, but prepared for the devil and his angels. The contrast between these two is most instructive: the one is, "Come, ye blessed of my Father;" the opposite is, not "Depart, ye cursed of my Father," but "Depart, ye cursed." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit;" the other is, "Depart, ye cursed"—not "*inherit*," but "Depart, ye cursed"—go on as you have been going; go on in the course you have taken upon earth, and continue it for ever and for ever. The one is, "*inherit the kingdom*"—the palace of kings and of priests; the other is, "*everlasting fire*"—everlasting, in spite of all the criticisms put upon the word. It is utterly impossible for any enlightened biblical scholar—with all respect for Professor Maurice—to come to any other conclusion than this: that if heaven be everlasting, and not a transient rest, hell is everlasting, and not a temporary purgatory. I cannot come to any other conclusion; and I do think that the learned professor would have done far greater service

if, instead of trying to explain away the misery of the lost, he had tried to show how welcome, how free, how open to every soul under heaven, are all the glories and the privileges of the blessed. If any soul perish, the strength of our appeal is in this, that it perishes a suicide. There are none but suicides in hell—that is, men self-slain. I know the difficulty in believing this—I know how we ministers often put obstructions in your way, instead of making plain the path of the Lord, by metaphysical questions, whilst we ought simply to state, as the Bible plainly tells us, that there is no decree in the past, or in the present, between one soul and Christ Jesus this moment; that there is nothing to prevent every sinner in this assembly—the oldest, the worst, and the vilest—from having perfect peace, through the blood of sprinkling, without money, and without price, and without delay, this very day. It is the very goodness of the offer that makes men think it too good to be true—it is the very simplicity of the Gospel that makes men hesitate to close with the glorious offers, and find, what they may now find—perfect peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are sure, however, that there is an election to heaven, or, in other words, we believe in the sovereignty of God's grace. Every soul that is saved feels that, before he came to God, God drew him to him; that God spoke to him before he replied; that the first impulse that leads him to heaven was communicated by God, often when he has sought it not, often when he expected it not, and always when he deserved it not. Well, grant me that God first draws me to follow him, without my wishing to do so first, and I

do not care whether you say that God purposed to do so millions of years ago, or whether he purposed to do so five minutes ago—it is all the same thing, because it is sovereign on God's part. Grant me, based on this, that I can deserve nothing, that I can purchase nothing, that I can do nothing, and that God must do all, or I am lost, and you withhold from me predestination or election as a word, but you have given me all that that word really contains.

Now the whole of the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is an unfolding of the doctrine of election. Some men would say, If we are elected to heaven, then we may live as we like. But the answer of the apostle is, Because you are chosen to heaven, *therefore* present your bodies living sacrifices, which is your reasonable service. Because you are not justified by anything you can do, because you are not sanctified by yourselves, but by the Spirit of God, therefore do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. In other words, the very truths which the world thinks open the floodgates of all licentiousness, are those which the apostle says constrain to whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report. And let me add, too, that election, as stated in the Bible, is neither stated as it is in the 17th Article of the Church of England, or as it is in our Confession of Faith. In both of these documents it is defined too much as a hard, dry, theological dogma. It is like a flower preserved between the leaves of a book—very beautiful, but very withered, and very dry. But in the Bible, it is presented in all its freshness, not as a mere dogma, but clothed

in the beauty and the interest of a living reality. The man whose heart is not changed by the Spirit of God, may talk about election as long as he will, but he talks about something he does not possess; and the man who does not believe the truth may talk about predestination as long as he will, but he has no lot or interest in Christ's reconciliation. If you will take care that you elect Christ as your only Saviour,—we can guarantee you that he has elected you [to be the heirs of his glory,—make yourselves sure of the lower evidence, and you need not be afraid of the higher result. Do not try to look into God's hidden book in heaven, to find your name there; but look into God's revealed book upon earth, and see what your character is there; and if you find that it agrees with what is there, you may be sure that your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. It is a most precious and interesting truth, that all the doctrines of grace are represented by the apostle as leading,—not as the world would say, to the practice of evil, but to the practice and to the preference of what is good. "Therefore," he says—"therefore, because these truths have been revealed; because you are chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, because you are justified by his righteousness alone, because you are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; because you are the inmates of the kingdom of heaven, therefore, on this very ground, "present your bodies, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "It is God that worketh in you;" but because God has thus vouchsafed his grace, and given you full, free, and irrevocable pardon through his own mercy,

in Christ Jesus, present your bodies living sacrifices to God, "your bodies"—the language is Levitical: it is plainly Aaronitic and sacrificial. It is equivalent to saying, Present all you are, all that you have, all you possess, a living sacrifice, acceptable to God. And when the sacrifice was presented by an offerer of old, the very first idea of it was renunciation of all right to it; when he had laid it upon the altar he gave up the whole of his interest in it: it was transferred completely. And when you, therefore, present your bodies to God, you give up your own interest in them; you cease to care about them in the sense of carking care; you cease to be anxious to provide for them; you have committed them to God to be dedicated to his glory, to be taken care of in his providence, and when deposited in the dust to be watched over by his omnipresence, till fit to be companions for the glorified and immortal souls. Your feet are to walk in his ways, your hands to fight the good fight, your ears to listen to his word, your hearts to love him, your intellects to study his character; all your faculties, however gifted, to minister to him; all your affections, however dear, to cluster round his throne; whatever you are, and have, and feel, and enjoy, to be consecrated to Him who has redeemed you by his blood, and made you sons and heirs of his glory.

It was to be a voluntary offering. No sort of sacrifice in ancient days was of any worth unless it was voluntary. And you recollect when we read of the erection of the Tabernacle, how strongly it was insisted upon by Moses that every offering that was *made* should be purely a voluntary offering. And by

the teaching of the apostle, you are still to *present* your bodies. The spontaneity of the act is part of its essential excellence. Hand-work, however beautiful, never can take the place of heart-work. What you do, whether in word or in deed, you are to do all to the glory of the Lord.

But you are to present this body of yours, we are told, a living sacrifice. There were two kinds of sacrifices. First,—animal sacrifices, as recorded in the first chapter of Leviticus ; these were expiatory, and are gone, now that Christ, the true sacrifice, is come. There were, secondly,—eucharistic sacrifices ; these are in the second chapter, and such are the sacrifices that we are now to offer to God. We have these very sacrifices noticed by inspiration itself. Isaiah says,—“They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.” Here are men represented as an offering unto the Lord. And, in this very epistle—the Epistle to the Romans—the apostle tells us, in language exactly of the same kind,—“That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” Here you have the phrase applied to Gentiles—that is, to Christians. Therefore our bodies are to be presented to God, not as expiations for sins they have done, but as expressions of gratitude and devotedness to Him, who, by one Atonement, has forgiven all sins of the past, and who asks us now, by the mercies we have so richly received, to consecrate ourselves as ministers and servants unto him who loved us, and gave himself for us.

This offering of our body is represented by the

apostle here, as a living sacrifice. The Jew presented the slain victim as the shadow of the Great Expiation for his sins. In the peace-offering he presented bread, or flour, or corn, and oil, and frankincense, as the expressions of his gratitude to God. But we present a sacrifice, nobler than the Jews ; which, though infinitely distant from Christ's offering of himself, is, next to Christ's, the greatest that can be offered on the altar, or presented to God himself. The life that is offered, is life in its noblest development—the life of the individual heart ; a living dedication to Him who has redeemed it by his precious blood. And the apostle uses the word “ body,” to denote that it is not merely a quiescent feeling, but active—the body, the exponent of the wants of the soul, the will of the heart, and the principles of the mind.

This sacrifice that we are to offer is called a holy one. You remember the victims selected for the altars of Aaron were to be without blemish, without spot. And the strict meaning of the word “ holy,” I think I told you before, is properly *separated, sequestered, set apart*. You have the word *holy* applied to profane things in the Bible, as you have it most generally applied to good, or pure, or noble things. And the reason is, that whatever is set apart is called in the Hebrew *kodosh*,—in the Greek *ἅγιος*,—Latin *sacer*, holy, or sacred. We find the expression in a Latin poet, *auri sacra fames*—literally, “ the sacred thirst of gold ;” but properly it means, “ the *accursed* thirst of gold ;” showing us that the meaning of the word *sacer*, or “ holy,” is simply that which is set apart for a specific purpose. When, therefore, we are told that our bodies are to be holy or sacred, it



means separated from the subjugation of Satan, separated from the service of sin, disinfected of every earthly taint, and of every mortal alloy, presented in all their purity to God ; so that to take that body and use it for sin, is the same as to desecrate the temple and profane the worship of the living and the true God. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?"

It is said in the next place, to be "acceptable unto God." The sacrifice made by us of our bodies is said to be acceptable to God. There are many sacrifices that men make, which are not acceptable. They may be good, or they may be pure, but the sacrifices are not therefore acceptable. He that clothes himself in coarse raiment, lives in a hermitage, separated from the rest of mankind, eats coarse food, fasts all day, and prays all night—such a man is not presenting an acceptable sacrifice. He may do it from a pure motive and with a good intent ; but the question that will be put to him, is,—“Who hath required this at thy hands?” When you ask the question,—“Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come as the Romanist? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old, with rams, and rivers of oil? Or shall I, like the heathen, give my first-born for the sin of my soul?”—however good your motives, however divine your end, yet all such things are blasted, because they are forbidden. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” This is acceptable service to God.

Not only is it acceptable service, but it is called in the next place your *reasonable* service. The word *reasonable* conveys the idea of something that contrasts with the material and the carnal. It is not a service of beasts and of birds, of bread and of corn, but the offering of something that relates to the soul, or the mind ; and, therefore, it contrasts with what is pompous, splendid, and magnificent. The acceptability of a sacrifice is not the splendour or riches of them that present it—it is not magnificent accompaniments of swinging censers, ascending frankincense—it is not gold and silver vessels,—altars on which are piled the riches of the earth,—these are no contributions to the excellence or the acceptability of the sacrifice ;—it must be the sacrifice of the heart, the offering of the willing mind ; the victim that God himself has enjoined : this only is acceptable to him.

Having seen the meaning of the text, let us next notice,—it is our duty to comply with the prescription of Paul. All you have is not your own, but God's. To him you owe the loyalty of subjects, the obedience of creatures, the praises and the acclamations of redeemed saints. This is the tax you owe to the King of kings ; this the tribute he demands : it is your duty cheerfully to pay it. But, in the next place, it is your privilege. We have too much of Sinai in the disposition of us all. We are so prone to think upon what we must do, and what we ought to do, and so averse to consider what we may do, and what it is our privilege to do. Your question here ought not to be, Ought I to do this ? but, May I do this ? It is privilege that God permits you to worship him—it is privilege that he permits you to read his Holy

Word. We ought more to feel that we *may*, than to feel that we *must*. And to present this sacrifice to God is our interest; for it is not only reasonable—the most reasonable thing upon earth is Christianity, the most irrational thing under the sun is scepticism; your consciences respond to my words when they testify within you that it is reasonable, but it is right, we ought to do it, but our passions, our preferences, and our prejudices, will not let us do it; it is our interest to do it, for it is acceptable to God. Whatever he is pleased to accept, surely it is our interest to offer. And it is to be done, as I have said, in faith. We are not to think that anything, anywhere offered, is acceptable to God; but we are to offer what he prescribes on the altar—Christ—that he has appointed, to the glory of the name of Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. And when we think that we owe to God all we have as creatures, all we taste every day of his providential goodness, all we hope for as the purchase of atoning blood, do we not feel, with an emphasis which these things ought to impart, we are not our own, we are bought with a price—the precious blood of a Lamb? therefore, let us glorify God with our souls and our bodies, which are his; or, translated into my text, “Present your bodies living sacrifices, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” In one sense—and here lies the greatness of man, but a greatness that embosoms his noblest obligations—brethren, all things are yours—whether the learned Paul, or the eloquent Cephas, or life with its trials, or death with its fears, or things present with their anxieties, or things to come with their hopes—all these things are yours;

you are magnificent possessors, you have a great inheritance; but, we must add what inspiration adds, you, the inheritors of all these things, are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Therefore, glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his. All that you have is a trust; you are but trustees. Your money is not your own; your time, your health, your strength, are not your own. Whatever you have, you have as a trustee. What would you say of that man who should take the money entrusted to him, and lay it out upon himself—what would you say of that Christian who begins his prayer, "God be merciful to me, and bless me, that thy ways may be known upon earth—that I may be a missionary—that I may diffuse the knowledge of Christianity, or thy saving health among all nations;" but who spends it totally upon himself? I do not say that you are not to enjoy whatever God gives you in his good providence. We do not advocate macadamizing all society, and reducing it all to the same dead level. I think that would be most absurd. While each man lives in the sphere in which Providence has placed him, and by doing so, confers the greatest good upon society around him, yet the poorest and the richest together must know that they have more than they can use—that there are mouths to be filled, nakedness to be clothed, ignorance to be taught, the weak to be raised up, the bowed down to be upheld; and a large world around looking for him that hath to go and help them that have not. Let us, then, my dear friends, as thus redeemed of God, as having all things from him, present our bodies living sacrifices unto Him. Our lives are not our own. Never forget that we all think, because we have a

sort of personality in our experience, that our life is our own. But what is the fact? Your life—for a single day, of every day—is in your trust only. Men talk of the need of miracles! Why, every morning God gives you a new life; every beat of your heart is a new burst of life to you! The constant tendency of life is to go out—like a spark on the sea, like warmth in winter. And there are, in every part of that poor body of yours, ten thousand chemical laws ready, the instant life lets go its hold, to seize upon that body, and reduce it to a mass of corruption so loathsome, that the nearest and the dearest are compelled to bury it out of sight in the grave. And whose, then, is your life? God's! And, if we owe life to God, surely we ought to consecrate it to his service. I have often thought that we have in sleep something like a foretaste of what death is. I seem to have a sort of hold upon my life when I am awake; but when sleep begins to steal over me, I feel as if I were letting go my life, that I have no power over it, that some one above me must take care of it, or I shall never wake again. Thus, sleep is a shadow and a foretaste of the grave, and shows, to the strongest and the healthiest, that in God you live, and move, and speak, and walk, and have your being. Therefore, therefore—I repeat the illative particle of the apostle—present that body continually to God, a living sacrifice.

And, lastly, our souls are not our own. God gave them, God has redeemed them; and the way to find our souls in everlasting joy is the way of consecrating them now to God's service. Priests on earth, consecrating all we are to him, we shall be consecrated as priests and kings to God in heaven, worshipping

and praising him for ever. And those bodies that we have consecrated now, whilst the soul dwells in them, will one day be raised from the grave, where they must be deposited for a season; and the fallen shrine of humanity shall be rebuilt at the sound of the last trump, and be the home of a glorious, immortal, and happy inhabitant. Consecrated on the altar below, our bodies shall be crowned on the throne that is above. The direction we have taken upon earth shall not be arrested, but perpetuated hereafter; and committing soul and body, and all we are, with all our cares, our fears, our doubts, our difficulties, unto Him, who is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day, let us not doubt for a moment that the soul that he has washed in his blood, the instant it leaves its earthly tenement, is a worshipper beside his throne; and the dead dust that we lay beneath the green sod, and over which the grass grows for a season, shall every atom of it hear the last trump, and soul and body, widowed for a season, shall be wedded again for ever; and so we shall be no more priests, with stammering lips and trembling hands presenting these imperfect offerings below, but priests and kings, singing, in a strain that will ever swell and never cease, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto our God, to him be glory, and thanksgiving, and praise." Amen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GREAT QUESTION.

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—MICAH vi. 6—8.

GENERALLY speaking, the unconverted man has no anxiety on the subject of religion at all; or, if a feeling flits through his mind on his responsibility to God, and his prospect of appearance at the judgment-seat, it is transient, and dismissed or buried amid other thoughts as speedily as possible. The worldly man thinks of religion as a mere affair, cherished by a few, but for which the multitude have very little time, and about which they need feel very little concern. The feeling is, one man likes painting, another man likes poetry, another trade, and another religion; every one to his own taste; let every one follow his own pursuit. Religion is regarded as one amid many accomplishments; and the plea is, “It is not my taste; it may be yours: let us agree to differ.” This is the common feeling. Anything more miserable one can

scarcely conceive; for religion, instead of being a subject numbered with the many for each to pursue according to his taste, or for others to reject according to their convictions or preferences, is that great truth that concerns every man, that affects every man, and that creates by its presence a load of responsibility inexhaustible on earth as his own immortality, and which will meet him at the judgment-day as a savour of life, or a savour of death.

When a step further is taken, and the thoughtless man is convinced that his soul is in peril, is satisfied that death does not end him, but only transfers him, and that by what he is on earth will be determined what he shall be for ever, then his first thought is to get rid of religion altogether; like the fool, he says in his heart, "No God;" like the ostrich before her pursuer, he hides his head in the earth, and hopes, because he does not see his peril, that there is none behind.

But when even this is found untenable, and a new, deeper, and more penetrating impression is produced; when he sees what God is, and feels what he himself is; and when all the opiates of the world will not deaden the feeling, and all the dissipation of life will not kill, conceal, or extirpate the thought; then he asks, almost in the agony of despair, "If this be so; wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" That is, in other words, the question, "What must I do to be saved? How shall I get salvation, and, through salvation, peace with God, peace with my own conscience, and with all mankind?"

The answer to that question is contained in the



sequel of this passage. It is obvious that acceptance is here described by the phrase, "come before God." "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" that is, how shall I be accepted of him? The thoughtless man says, "No God;" the Christian walks with God, lives before God, does all he does, thinks what he thinks, pursues what he pursues, under the eye of his Father and his God. The question, therefore, of the thoughtful man is, "How shall I come before this Being? I, clad with sin, before perfect purity—I, pressed down by my transgressions, before a holy and just God? Wherewith shall I be entitled to his presence, armed against his righteous judgments? what will constitute me the recipient of his sparing mercy, and embosom me in his everlasting and precious love?" Thus, the soul, awakened to a sense of its ruin, asks earnestly the question, "Wherewith shall I come before God?"

The first thought is, to take something that is within one's reach, and to offer that, if peradventure God will accept it. Hence the very first question, "Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings? Shall I renew the rites and ceremonies of Levi? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, if I had them? Would the sacrifice of so many lead to his forgiving sins, and accepting me as his child? Or shall I do what is desperate, almost impossible, certainly sinful,—slay my firstborn, and offer him for the sin of my soul?" My dear friends, when a person is under deep conviction of sin, there is no agony he will not endure, no sacrifice he will not make, no dear and cherished thing that he has, which he will not freely part with, if that agony can be laid, and the

sure and certain expectancy of happiness can only be made intelligible and clear to him, or the prospect of meeting God, a just God, and yet a Saviour.

The reason why such things are thought of is this, that God is seen high, holy, just, true ; that the sinner sees himself low, sinful, ruined, guilty ; and the difficulty that occurs to his mind is, How shall such a one be just with God ? He hears ringing still from the heights of Sinai, "The soul that sins shall die ;" in his own conscience the echoes of that sound are not yet laid ; and, under the feeling of self-condemnation within, and in the sight of a condemning God without, he asks in agony increased, but not lulled, "Wherewith shall I come before the High God ?" Is there anything on earth that will introduce me ? Is there anything upon earth that I can do that I may propitiate him ? He mentions all the sacrifices recorded here ; and the soul feels that they are all vain. No tears shed like the rains in April can wash away the least transgression ; no blood of victims slain upon a thousand altars can expiate a single sin ; no resolution for the future, no correction of conduct you can conceive, attempt, or accomplish, will be any compensation for the law you have broken, and the sins you have committed in the past ; and the very first discovery that the sinner makes after the proposal to give thousands of rams and rivers of oil, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, is the fact that neither by these, nor by sacrifices, nor by offerings, nor by deeds of law, of any sort, or shape, or value, can a man be justified in the sight of God.

But the answer is given ; for never does the Holy Spirit propound a difficulty without indicating a solu-

tion of it. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." This clause is quite distinct from the rest. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;" that is, you need not ask, "How can I appear before God?" any more; for God has shown you. Then there follows a question quite distinct from this answer, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

It is said, "God hath showed thee, O man;" that is, he has told you. How has he told you? In types that foreshadowed the way; in prophecies, the musical announcements of it; in doctrines that clearly, distinctly, and unmistakeably describe it; in sacraments that are the seals, the pledges, and the signs of it; and in words which the wayfaring man cannot misunderstand. Or, it is, he hath shown thee this, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "In Christ, we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "By him all are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Therefore, cease to propose rivers of oil; give up dreaming of rams, and the sacrifice of goats and bullocks upon earthly altars; lay aside all idea of giving thy first-born for the sin of thy soul. There is nothing to be done; it is finished. There is nothing to be sacri-

ficed ; the sacrifice has been made. There is nothing to be suffered ; the penalty has been paid. There is nothing to be given in exchange ; for Christ's righteousness, our title to heaven, is unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference. There is an end of penances, and tears, and mortifications, and pilgrimages, and fasts, and alms, as atoning or expiatory in any way, or shape, or degree. It is finished. There is a perfect Saviour, a perfect title, a perfect Sacrifice ; and as free to the poor as it is necessary to the rich ; for it is without money and without price. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good."

This is truly good ; it is the good news ; and if I were to translate it into New Testament language, I would render it thus, "He hath spoken to thee, O man, the Gospel." For what is the Gospel ? Good news. "He hath showed thee what is good"—told you the glad tidings of good. And oh, how good is it ! Suited to the sinner, for it descends into the deepest depth into which he has fallen. Suited to him, for it takes him as he is, in order to make him what he should be. It is good, for he has not to wait for it a single hour, nor to pay for it a single penny ; but just as he is, to go in Christ's name to God just as He is, and to taste the good things he has provided, and to hear the good news, and justified by faith thus to have peace with God—delivered from the greatest evil, raised into the greatest safety—transferred from "the Mount that might be touched, where was blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of words ; so that even Moses himself did exceedingly fear and quake," and brought to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." This is good. It is the good news, the good result—the one so joyous to the ear, the other so satisfying to the heart. And, as we hear it, are we not constrained to exclaim, what Micah says in another part of his prophecy, "If this be so, who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

And mark how good this is. When God thus pardons, he does not compromise his own character. The beauty of the Gospel, that which meets our difficulties, satisfies all our anxious fears, doubts, perplexities, misgivings, is this,—that when God thus justifies the guiltiest, he receives to himself the greatest glory. He does not become unjust that he may have mercy; but he is just while he justifies. When, therefore, you ask God to show you what is good by manifesting himself to you as the sin-pardoning God, you do not ask him to do a thing that is either difficult, or incompatible with his own character, or inconsistent with his own attributes; but you ask God to do that which he delights to do, to give forgiveness to the greatest sinner, acceptance to the guiltiest sinner, that thereby he may derive glory to his name, and be manifested as a God to whom there is none in the heaven or in the

earth like; who pardoneth sin, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. Such then is the answer to the question.

And now, what will be the character exhibited by those who have found and felt this thing in their own happy experience? This is what they will do. They will "do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God." You will do all that God requires of you, not as the price of this, but as the evidence of your gratitude for it; for he shows you the good thing first—he asks of you the good character next. He does not say, "Do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God, in order that you may reach the good thing;" but by grace freely he tells you how you are pardoned, and he says, "Now, what I ask of you, not as a compensation, not as a reward, but as the instructive and joyous expression of your own most grateful and loving hearts, is, that you, my children, will go forth to a world that disowns me and dislikes you, and show them that freedom from the curse is not freedom from devotedness to God, and justice to man, and love to all mankind; but that those who are freely pardoned are fully characterized by all the fruits that adorn the Christian character, win enemies to its acceptance, and give glory to Him who has done so much for them."

What then does He require? First, that you will "do justly;"—in the warehouse, in the shop, in the counting-house, wherever you are, that you will do justly. Do what is just. How beautiful is that! There is joy in being just; there is a satisfaction in doing what is honest. There need be, and there must be, *no* pride in it; and yet, the consciousness that one

is doing what is right, is by a law lasting as the attributes of Deity, in its place, in its nature, and in its measure, a spring of satisfaction and delight.

And not only "doing justly," but "loving mercy,"—the recipients of so great mercy as that which God has shown going forth and displaying mercy, in their measure, and according to their means, among all mankind. Not imitating the servant who received great forgiveness from his lord, and then went to a fellow-servant, and said, with all the imperious exacting of tyrant from a slave, "Pay me that thou owest;" but showing mercy, where mercy can be exercised without violating the law, or injuring the duties that you owe to yourself, your family, and society. Thus let mercy be shown, and you will find that it will be twice blessed; like the gentle rain that drops from heaven, it will bless him that gives, and him that takes.

And not only "love mercy," but "walk humbly." No proud thoughts can lodge in that heart that feels that it was grace that forgave it; that forgiveness is not the reward of anything done by it, but the result wholly of something done for it. Wherever that feeling exists, and in proportion to the force with which it exists, will be that humility which looks upon others as better than oneself, and walks, like Noah, and Enoch, and Abraham, humbly before God.

Thus we see that our religion leads to true holiness, and that the man who has seen with greatest clearness, and felt in greatest power, God's goodness in the forgiveness of his sins through Jesus Christ, will manifest to the world the utmost amount of the Christian character, by doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with his God.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHRISTIAN PRIESTS.

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

HEBREWS xiii. 15.

You will recollect, that after reading the seventh chapter of the Book of Leviticus, I noticed, what so much distinguishes that chapter,—the offerings of a eucharistic or thanksgiving nature, frequently and fully enjoined and elucidated throughout it; and I stated that these, under the ancient Levitical economy, were the modes appointed by God himself, by which the Jew expressed to that God his gratitude for those mercies which were showered down upon him; and that though the mode be altered under the Christian and the evangelical economy, yet the substance remains still obligatory upon us all. We, too, are to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving as truly as the Jew, because we have mercies as many, as rich, as impressive, as his. These are not two antagonistic religions—the Levitical and the Evangelical; but the same religion, expressed in the one in one way, and expressed in the other in another—a simpler and more spiritual way. The Gospel is according to Levi, just as the Gospel is according to John. It is the same Gospel, expressed in types, and forms, and ceremonies,



many thousand years ago, but now brought clearly to light, and of which the grand and distinguishing characteristic is, "Neither on this mountain nor on that mountain, when ye worship the Father, but they that worship God should worship him in spirit and in truth,"—for such now God seeketh to worship him.

The Psalms of David have fully as often songs of praise as they have earnest supplications and petitions for mercy. One psalm is often a prayer for mercy and forgiveness, but the very next psalm is a song, a rich song of thankfulness for mercies and blessings received. The same lips that poured forth the fervent litany contained in Psalm LI. poured forth the brilliant and expressive song of thanksgiving contained in Psalm CIII. We shall find in the Psalms all the lights and shadows of Christian experience—the expressed want that is felt to-day, the joyous thankfulness that is sung to-morrow. Gratitude, or thanksgiving, is a virtue not altogether a stranger to the human heart. Even the great poet could teach, that to call a man unthankful was to brand him with the heaviest infamy. There is something even in the wreck of human nature that shows us, that to be thankful for a blessing is one of the simplest and first duties that devolve upon us after the receipt of it. We may thank the wrong object, we may thank imperfectly, but still wherever benefits are received, generally speaking, more or less of gratitude is felt. But when this feeling of gratitude is inspired by the Spirit of God, then it shoots far above all terrestrial objects, and finds its repose, its resting-place, and its object, only in the good, the munificent, the unwearied

Giver of every good and of every perfect gift. Now, according to the prescriptions of Leviticus, the Jew expressed his thankfulness by sacrifices most burdensome, most heavy, constituting a load that our fathers were unable to bear. But the same language is used by the Apostle Paul that Levi would have used, and explained by the apostle as a more spiritual and simple duty. Still we have an altar, still we have sacrifices, still we have priests, but of a very different description from those that are delineated in the Book of Leviticus, or instituted by God under the Jewish economy.

I have said we still have an Altar. The apostle tells us that. In this very chapter he says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle; wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." The apostle plainly tells us, that Jesus is the Christian's altar; and to show that he is the altar, you have only to recollect that it was the altar's function to give to the sacrifice, or to the gift, all its virtue and its excellence. "It is the altar that sanctifieth the gift." And the apostle here speaks of priesthood and sacrifice, when he says, "By him"—that is, by Christ—"let us"—the priests—"offer the sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; giving thanks to the name of God." Then, when we offer our sacrifices, whatever they may be, we are to do so, not upon the golden altar of Levi, from which fragrant incense rose under the ancient economy in ascending and acceptable clouds to God; but by Him who is the antitype of the golden altar, *who is not only the golden altar, but has the golden*

censer ; on which, with the much incense of his intercession, the prayers of "all saints"—that is, all believers—are constantly presented and offered unto God. It is translated into other words by the apostle, when he says, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "Giving thanks always, for all things, unto God, even the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." To present the sacrifices of thanksgiving by Him, as the golden altar, or to present them in his name—the only name given among men whereby we can be saved—is all one and the same thing. His name cleaves a passage to the skies for the earnest petition, for the fervent praise. No man, however excellent, no prayer, however spiritual, no praise, however beautiful, cometh unto the Father, but by Christ, the altar, in the name of Christ the Mediator, through him in whose golden censer it is placed, and thus accepted of the Most High.

You will notice, too, that Jesus is not only the golden altar, but the brazen altar. The brazen altar was for the sacrifice of propitiatory victims ; the golden altar was for the ascending incense ; and what was offered on the golden altar was done after the offering on the brazen altar was presented without. Now, Christ was the altar of brass, in that he made thereon a perfect propitiation for the sins of all that believe, even to the end of the world ; and he is the golden altar inasmuch as all incense of praise and thanksgiving must be presented by him continually. The work of the altar of brass is finished : when he suffered without the gate he made an end of sin ; he finished transgression, he brought in everlasting righteousness. No atonement now can be made ; none is needed to be made. The

merits of that one atonement are inexhaustible whilst there is a sin to be forgiven, or a sinner among mankind to be saved. But there is still the work of the golden altar, or the offerings of praise and thanksgiving by him, as the apostle calls it, continually. And whenever, therefore, we present praise or thanksgiving to God, we are to do it in the name, or upon the altar, or by and through Christ Jesus; and God asks of us, not what he asked of the children of Israel—the herd of the stall, or the fruit of the vine, or the oil of the olive—but the glad thankfulness of a thankful heart; and he asks us to express it in the simple language of fervent praise. It is not enough to feel it; we must express it. It is not enough to be thankful; we must say so. It is not enough to pray with the heart, but we must, when we have opportunity, pray with the lip. It is not enough to praise with the heart, but we must, when we have opportunity, praise with the lip. The apostle adds, “The fruit of your lips.” Not simply the expression of the heart, which is the chief thing, but also the fruit of the lips, which will always follow wherever it is truly felt. That is, the apostle teaches us that the Christian religion is to be first a thing of the heart, but not only to be a thing of the heart,—it is to be first, a thing of the heart; it is to be secondly, as a necessary sequence, a thing of the lip and of the life. And, therefore, Christians in the congregation are to join in prayer and in praise; they ought by the bowed knee, or the open lip, to praise and pray to Him, who has promised to be present wherever he is pleased to record his holy name.

Having seen the altar, having seen also the sacri-

fices that we are to render, let me notice, in the next place, that all true Christians are hereby designated priests. "By him *offer*:" that is priestly language. But to whom does he speak? He speaks to the Christian Jews—the laity—scattered through the whole Roman empire. In other words, he speaks to us believers in every age and every place of the world. And this language is only in keeping with the rest of the New Testament. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Again, says John, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." Therefore no minister of the Gospel is a priest in any other sense than that in which a layman is. There is no more priesthood among the Christian ministry than there is among the Christian laity. The humblest believer is as much a priest as the highest archbishop. One may differ from the other in this,—that the one is a pastor, an evangelist, a teacher, a bishop, a presbyter; but they do not differ in that one is a priest, and the other is not. All Christians are priests, because all have the same sacrifices to offer,—namely, praise, thanksgiving, soul, body, and spirit, good works, beneficence. "To do good and to communicate forget not," "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." And the minister of the Gospel has no sacrifice to offer that a Christian layman has not to offer also. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice; baptism is not a sacrifice; a sermon is not a sacrifice; and therefore he has no sacrifice to offer that a Christian has not to offer; for all of us are equally enjoined to offer sacrifices that belong to all, and are peculiar to no

one class distinctively. All should thank God ; and a layman is to do it as much as a minister ; all should do good ; all should present offerings — soul, body, and spirit, a living sacrifice. Therefore, all Christians are priests ; and what a grandeur does it impart to the humblest offering, that it is as sacerdotal an act, as priestly an act, as beautiful before God as any victim that the priests of Levi ever slew, or that the patriarchs of the world ever presented on their early altars !

These sacrifices, says Paul, we are to offer to God continually. Now here the language contrasts with the Levitical. Under the Jewish economy there were stated days, stated hours, and stated places ; under the Christian economy there is no place unclean ; there is no day uncanonical ; anywhere, everywhere, any time, always ; when the heart feels grateful it can light up the incense of its offerings, the expressions of its thankfulness, to God that giveth. There is no spot in the earth on which you may not do so ; there is no employment that is lawful in which you may not do so. As we have always wants, therefore we are to pray always. As we are receiving always blessings, therefore we are to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving continually. And he who feels most wants, and finds most supply from God, will always feel most gratitude, and express it most continually to God.

The language of the apostle is, in the next place, evidence that such offerings are acceptable to God. He would not bid us offer them if they were not so. The ancient Jew had the most entire conviction that when his priest presented for him the victim, on which he laid his hand, or the eucharistic offering, expressive

of his gratitude, the God of Abraham waited to accept it: and we may have as entire confidence as ever the Jew had, that the song of praise, however low, will reach the skies; that the voice of prayer, however obscure, will pierce God's ear; and that He that heard Abraham, and vouchsafed his answer to Levi, will equally hear, and answer, and bless us also. And when we think, my dear friends, of all that we have to be thankful for, we feel how appropriate on all occasions is the prescription, "Let us offer to Him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving continually." Our mercies are fresh every evening, and they are renewed every morning. The 103rd Psalm is a bright string of bright mercies, for which we should praise God. "He forgiveth our iniquities; he healeth our diseases; he redeemeth our life from destruction; he crowneth us with loving-kindness, and with tender mercy; he satisfieth our mouth with good things; he executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed; he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy; he will not always chide; he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "Therefore let us offer unto him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving continually—that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." And when we think of all the blessings that we have received in the past, we cannot too earnestly confess our sins, or too enthusiastically ap-

preciate our mercies. There are blessings of a temporal kind, that grow around God's footstool ; these are showered down upon us equally from on high ; and for these it becomes us also to praise him. By sin we have forfeited all ; and therefore the least pulse of a healthy heart, the least bread in your basket, is redemption mercy ; and for that we ought to thank and praise him. And there are what are called spiritual mercies, for which we should praise him—pardoning mercies, redeeming mercies, sanctifying mercies, adopting mercies ;—the gift of his Son ; the sending of the Holy Spirit ; the possession of a Bible in our own tongue ; freedom to read it ; liberty to speak out what we have read from it ; a place of worship ; means of grace ; hopes of glory ; some humble reason for believing that we have felt the force, and tasted the blessedness of these things. Are not these words of the apostle applicable to us ? “ Let us offer to him the sacrifice of praise continually ? ”

To show how natural gratitude is, or rather, how reasonable it is, let me notice, that to own our receipt of blessings that we have asked, is the least that we can do for them. Praising God, is just acknowledging to God the receipt of the blessings that we ask from God. It will not do to pray like Christians, and possess as if we were atheists. The sense of want that the Spirit inspires will always end in praise that the Father will accept.

And then, in the next place, this praise is the declaration with our spirit that God is the Fountain of all our blessings. We are sometimes apt to look at the gift, and to forget the Giver ; we are sometimes apt to trace our best blessings to secondary sources ;—



and no one doubts that there are secondary sources, or secondary causes. The minister who has been the means of enlightening you, you ought to be thankful to ; but your thankfulness should never rest with him, but rise far above him, and reach God. The physician whose skill has cured you of disease, is a secondary instrument ; thank him, but your thankfulness should rise far above him, and reach God. We are all prone enough to give the thanksgiving—that is, the sacrifice—to the secondary cause ; let us however look above it, and present the sacrifice of thanksgiving chiefly to God, and that continually. And you may depend upon it, he will not be a long possessor, or a glad possessor of great mercies, who is not a thankful possessor. Slighted mercies are always the sharpest judgments. Let us not then own our sins as some do, thinking they are far less than they are ; and let us not own our blessings, as some do, thinking they are far fewer than we deserve. Let us be humbled by a sense of our sins ; let us be thankful for the enjoyment of our mercies. Let both bring us to present sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God—that is, the fruit of our lips—by Christ Jesus continually.

But this language seems to relate specially to publicly doing so. You will observe the whole Epistle to the Hebrews is the exposition of temple rites, temple ceremony, temple sacrifices ; and being temple language it is of course descriptive of or allusive to public worship. Thus, therefore, he implies we are not only privately, not only in the family, but in the sanctuary by Christ Jesus, in whose name we meet, in whose name we are baptized, in whose name we are blessed, to present the sacrifice of praise and thanks-

giving to God continually, giving thanks to his name ; or, as it is in the margin, "confessing his name,"—not ashamed of it, not ashamed to proclaim it, boldly avowing whose we are, whom we serve, and to whom we feel indebted for the least crumb of bread, and for the brightest crown of glory.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE OBJECT AND END.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

GALATIANS IV. 4, 5.

You will at once perceive that the expressive statement I have read is an epitome of the birth, the life; the sorrow, the death and sacrifice, of the Son of God. It knits together in one the transactions of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter; it tells us that He was born, that he redeemed us; and that by that redemption which he accomplished on the cross, we now, by his grace, receive the adoption of sons. Every clause in the verse I have read is most suggestive and instructive. The Great Personage here described is called the Son of God. "God sent forth his Son." His assumption to be the Son of God was to the Jews that heard the assumption, the evidence that he blasphemed. They said, "Art thou the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am." That does not mean, "You say so, whether I be so or not;" but it means, "You say that very thing which I am, namely, I am the Son of God." Well, what followed? They said, "What need we any

further witness? for we ourselves have heard out of his own mouth ;” or, as it is in a parallel statement, “He is guilty of blasphemy.” Now, every Jew understood that the epithet, “Son of God,” meant and conveyed essential Deity: they were the best judges of their own language; and if the assumption of that relationship had not conveyed the claim of essential Deity, then, when the Jews so understood it, and so understood Christ to assume to be, and if he had not been Deity he would instantly have explained to them, “I am not God, and therefore I am not guilty of blasphemy; I do not pretend to be so, and your interpretation of the phrase is too strong.” But he never did so. If Jesus was a mere man, and in no sense God, then he imposed pretensions on mankind utterly irreconcilable with the pure and holy character he sustained throughout; but if he was God, then the expression, “Son of God,” which he assumed for himself was only his asserting that which we can otherwise demonstrate—he is God over all, blessed for ever. So means also the expression, “Though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal to God, he took upon him the form of a servant.” Now ask the Unitarian interpreter what is meant by Christ taking the form of a servant; and he will answer, He became literally a servant, obedient to God. Very well; if, “being in the form of a servant,” means that he was literally a servant, then the corresponding clause in the text, “the form of God,” means also that he was literally God. It is impossible to escape from admitting that Christ was God any more than it is possible to escape from admitting that he was man. Prove to me that Christ was not God, and I will

prove to you, by stronger reasons, that he was not man. It is easier in the Gospel to find proofs of the Deity, if possible, than it is to find proofs of the very humanity of Jesus. He was the Son of God; in asserting that, he assumed for himself the attribute of Deity.

But I take the text before me in its successive steps. "God sent forth his Son." Well now, that alone would prove that Jesus was surely something more than man. If he was sent forth by God, then he had an existence previous to his birth in the inn, and his life as the Man of sorrows. He sent forth his Son.

That Son was "made of a woman." A true and real humanity; our sensibilities, our susceptibilities, our openness to joy, our liability to sorrow, to woe, to tears and suffering; all these Jesus became. We never for one moment refuse to believe that he was man; it is plain he was man, and perfectly, completely so—sin only excepted. But you say, We find all men sinners. But then that does not prove that sin is part of humanity. When you go into an hospital, you find men sufferers under some disease; but that does not imply that that disease is part and parcel of human nature. Sin was something that crept into human nature—a *miasma*; where it came from, how to explain its entrance, we know not; but this we know, that man was made holy and happy, and sin entered afterwards, and death by sin. So Jesus was perfect man. Now if he had been a sinner, he could not have been perfect man, but an imperfect, corrupt, and fallen man; and, being sinful himself, he could not have been sacrificed for us. But

man he was ; he wept, he rejoiced, he was hungry, he was thirsty, he was weary. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He was God manifest in the flesh. "God sent his Son, made of a woman." The contrast is remarkable. It may be said of you and me, *born* of a woman ; but the expression here is remarkable, *made* of a woman. Sent ;—here is a previous existence ; subsequently to his being sent, he was made of woman. This at least would demonstrate a previous existence.

Then at the next clause, "He was made under the law." Not the ceremonial law, but the moral law ; because Paul was writing to Gentiles : and the result of this redemption is, that we should receive the adoption of sons—a moral result accruing from Christ being under the moral law. In Paradise, when we were made, we were placed under the law. Obedience would have been perpetual peace with us and God ; disobedience the doom denounced upon it—the wages of sin, namely, death. Now Jesus became subject to the law just as Adam was, for he obeyed it, and earned its reward. Being a representative then of us, if he had faltered or fallen he would have lost himself, if that were possible, and we should have lost our restoration. Adam, placed under the law, broke it, and brought death into the world, and all our woe ; Christ, placed under the law, kept it, and brought righteousness into the world, and its everlasting reward. Adam in Paradise was made a representative personage : and we are fallen in him the instant we are born into a fallen world, Jesus came into the world a representative personage, and we that believe in him are justified by what he

did, and admitted to the heaven that we justly forfeited. Thus our restoration travels along the very line of our ruin; redemption is the unwinding of what the fall has wound up and done; and, therefore, as by the disobedience of our first representative head, who was human, all men are constituted sinners; so by the obedience of our second Adam, our second representative Head, all that believe on him, that are willing to accept of it, that will step out of the first Adam relationship, and come into the second Adam relationship, will be justified, acquitted, accepted, and saved.

I take a step further, as a proof of the essential deity of our Lord. If his calling himself the Son of God was proof of Deity, if his being sent and made of a woman is evidence of previous existence, I go a step further; and I say, that if I wish the most powerful proof that Jesus was God, I would just quote this incidental one—"made of a woman, made under the law." All of us are by nature under the law. The very condition of creatureship is obedience to law. We are subjects of the Great Sovereign, creatures of the Great Creator, children of the same Father; and we are born under the law, to obey it; and if we disobey it, that is our ruin. But Christ was *made* under the law; and that expression, *made* under it, implies that he was originally not under it; and if not under law, he was originally above law. And who is above law? Only the Legislator, or the great Maker of Law. And therefore the very words, "made under the law," are to me irresistible, and I think to every sound mind irrefragable proof, that if the apostle wrote by inspiration, and understood his own language, he taught in this pas-

sage that Jesus previously existed, that Jesus was above law, therefore the Maker of Law, the Legislator, or the Lord of law ; and that those who conclude that he was God over all, blessed for evermore, are not guilty of extravagance, do not pervert plain passages, but assert what is indisputable and demonstrable fact.

Now, I quote these incidental proofs of the deity of Jesus, not, in my humble judgment, that we need them ; for, take away that truth, and I do not think that Christianity would be glad tidings to all mankind. It seems to me that if all that the New Testament is, be merely a clear exhibition of God's law, it is not necessary. The Ten Commandments tell clearly enough what God demands, and our own consciences tell us plainly enough that we cannot keep them. And if, therefore, Christianity be merely a clearer unfolding of duty, greater encouragements to do it, I can only say it is a step a little in advance of Socrates and Plato ; I cannot see in it that which I want as a poor sinner. If I am in an hospital, I do not want to be taught to walk ; I want to be cured of my disease, and then instinctively I shall walk. I am sick ; I want a physician, not a model. I am a sinner ; I need not simply to be told what it is to do right, but I need to be informed how sin shall be pardoned ; not only to be told that it could be pardoned, but be so satisfied that God is holy, and just, and true while he pardons my sins, that I shall have confidence in his government, confidence in his promises, and believe that it is his glory to forgive as well as that it is possible that I can be forgiven.

And therefore says the apostle, he was made of a woman, made under the law, for what purpose ? "To



redeem them that were under the law." Not to be a model to us; not, he was made of a woman to teach us; not to show how a martyr can die: but he was made of a woman, made under the law, to receive redemption by a price, redemption through his blood; to bear my sins, that I might never bear them; to obey my law, that I, who have broken it, may not be condemned by it; to rescue me from the condemnation of sin, from the pollution of sin, and from the power of sin. He came an expiation, not a mere example; he died a victim, not a mere martyr. His sufferings were not for his own sins, but the iniquities of us all were laid upon him. He was wounded for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was upon him. What beautiful combinations there are in every passage that describes what Christ was! What evidences of his holiness, what lights revealing to us his grandeur, what proofs of the Sufferer, what proofs of the King of kings and Lord of lords! I think the whole biography of Christ in the Gospels is utterly inexplicable, except on the hypothesis that God was there, treading on the waters of the sea, hushing the fierce winds, quickening the dead, weeping, rejoicing, triumphing, doing miracles that were divine, and bearing burdens that were human—the presence of God manifest in the flesh. Grant that one truth—that Jesus was God in my nature, and the whole of the New Testament is luminous, harmonious, plain.

In noticing the character of Jesus—his remarkable and striking character—the agony that he endured in the garden—the sorrow that he felt everywhere, we see what intensity of feeling was always and everywhere in the character of Jesus. There was a simplicity, and yet

a solemnity, which indicated, even when he rejoiced in spirit, that it was but the ripple of the wave on the surface; the awful depths of his soul below were undisturbed in their great and holy calm. In reading his life, all must notice the intensity of his feelings. And one can see how natural this was. There are moments in everybody's history—what are called critical, it may be rare moments—when the whole future depends upon a step or a decision that you form that very day. And when the destinies of others, as well as our own, are contingent upon our decision, then the pressure becomes overwhelming, and decision is courted as the only possible relief. Jesus ever felt this intensity of feeling, because every word he spoke, every act he did, every thing he said or suffered, all involved and related to the glory of God, and the salvation of innumerable souls. If an individual man feels at one moment so intensely that decision in any shape is relief to his irrepressible feelings, how must Jesus have felt when, being a man just as we are, he felt the whole weight of the world, and the whole responsibility of the salvation of millions and millions contingent upon every decision, upon every step, upon every act of that wondrous biography! But more than that; when Adam, our representative, stood with the weight of our condition and destiny upon his shoulder, Adam was in a beautiful spot, breathing a balmy air, all things co-operating with him, nothing calculated to irritate, to exasperate, or to grieve him; but when Jesus came into our world to redeem us that were under the law, he came into a world fallen; the very men he came to save in that world shouted and cried, "Crucify him!" every thing to grieve him

was in it, nothing holy, beautiful, or good. He must, however, have felt, if I may apply such a phrase to him, the awful responsibility of being the Sacrifice—the Saviour, by what he was, and did, and said, and suffered, of unnumbered millions of mankind. But what is more, when Jesus came into this world to redeem us that were under the law, he was, in all he thought, and felt, and said, alone. We know that in a critical moment, when much may depend upon our decision, we call in a counsellor. Sympathy softens the bitterest sorrow, and lightens half of the heaviest load: and when it is a matter involving great difficulty, the advice of a friend, a judicious counsellor, how precious is it! But when Jesus came to redeem us, he was, in the most awful sense of the word, alone. He trod the wine-press alone; he had sympathy nowhere upon earth; he had advice nowhere, if he needed it, upon earth. At his death all forsook him and fled; at the solemn moment of the Supper, they began to dispute which should be greatest and chiefest in the kingdom of heaven; he was, from first to last, alone; and the loneliness of his agony, even when in the midst of crowds, was part and parcel of the weight, and poignancy, and pressure of that cross which he had to bear. And not only was he alone, but he was accused by man, he was tempted by Satan in the hour of frailty and weakness; all elements against him; all hostile, none friendly. And yet, in spite of all, in the midst of all, he finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness; and by him, thus made under the law, made of a woman, frail, weak, sorrowful, suffering, we are redeemed as by his blood, and made kings and priests unto our

God,—and unto him for ever and for ever. Here, then, we have the good news of the Gospel—these are good news I am speaking to you this day, not as a teacher of what you should be, but as a preacher of a cure provided for you sinners. The very key-note of the glad music of the Gospel is, that He is come to seek and to save them that are lost—that he was made under the law, not to teach, not to present a model, but to redeem them that were under the law. The great peculiarity of Christianity is, that it is a remedial system; the pulpit is a place for prescriptions for the sick, the sinful, and the dying, not a desk for giving directions to them that are whole. The pulpit of a Unitarian is simply a desk from which he snows down cold directions to men, on the supposition that they are strong and able to walk to heaven. But the pulpit of them that believe in the deity of Christ is a place from which are scattered more beautiful, and ten thousand times more precious than from an earthly pharmacopœia, prescriptions for the sick, the sinful, the dying, the chiefest of sinners, ensuring instant pardon and eternal peace through the blood of Him that was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Then behold what a dignity the incarnation of Christ confers on human nature. Beautiful thought! the Architect of this wondrous house of ours has taken up his residence in the midst of it; a fragment of my nature is glorified, and in the presence of Him who dwelleth in light inaccessible, and full of glory; and that portion of my humanity is there, not as a fact dead

and done with, but as a proof and pledge to me that the way is open to me to the same height, and that through that precious sacrifice of Jesus I can be raised and elevated too.

In the second place, what a sublime dispensation is the Gospel; what strange antagonisms are concerned in it; infinitude and finitude, eternity and time, weakness and omnipotence, life and death, God and man, heaven and earth! These antagonisms welded in one, constitute the peculiarity of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Sin was a system of dislocation, of disruption, of fracture; love in the Gospel is the grand system of union and of concord. This earth, which sin struck off from the great continent of heaven, and left a lonely isle upon the bosom of the desert sea, is, by Christ's redemption, re-attached to the great continent of heaven, and partakes again of its sunshine, its happiness, and its joy. He has redeemed it and us, that we may receive the adoption of sons, and earth be restored with all things.

How guilty, I ask, in the next place, are we if we neglect so great salvation! Men perish not generally by rejecting the Gospel, but by neglecting it. I very much respect a sceptic who says, "I have examined all proof, investigated all history, read thoroughly the Bible, and I have formed the conviction that the Bible is not true." I think he is dreadfully misguided; that he is terribly mistaken. I can barely conceive such a result possible; and in past instances, such as Paine, and Voltaire, and Rousseau, most of them admitted they had never read the Bible, except some texts, that they might make merry with. But I say,

suppose it to be possible that a man comes to the conclusion of being a sceptic, after thorough investigation, I will respect such a man. I understand his position, I lament it, I deplore it, I think he is greatly misguided; yet I respect him: but I can scarcely respect the man who knows the Gospel, and neglects it; who has not the manliness to reject it, or the piety to accept it; but lives, with truths sounding in his ears enough to raise the dead, and to electrify them that are most insensible, and yet lives, and speaks, and talks as if no Christmas had ever shone upon our earth, and no agony and bloody sweat had ever been recorded in the annals of mankind. Well might an apostle say, "How shall we escape, if we"—not reject, but if we—"neglect so great salvation?" "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

What a dignity is conferred upon the sorrows and the sufferings of Christ! Each tear cancelled a sin—each agony exhausted a curse. His sufferings were the sufferings of man, but made precious, infinitely precious, because the sufferings of God in our nature. And, in the next place, what ground of trust have we in the Gospel! When we rest upon this blessed Jesus as our Saviour, we do not rest upon an arm of

flesh. Though he was made of a woman, though he was made under the law, yet when we rest upon him, we do not rest upon a mere arm of flesh. I could trust my wealth to a man; I could trust my name, my credit, my character to man; I could trust anything I have in this world to man; and there are men, who are not Christians, most honourable, most upright, most just, in whose hands I could place untold millions; and this we ought to be, but that is not all. I say I can trust everything I have in this world to man; but there is one thing I would not trust to the Queen upon the throne, I would not trust to the highest angel that is beside God's throne, and that is, my soul. I must have God to take care of my soul, or I will risk the experiment of taking care of it myself. If Christ were a mere man, I could not trust him with my soul. He might falter, he might fall. It is my all; if it is gone, it is gone for ever—if it is lost, it is irretrievably lost. But I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able—there is the glad tidings—that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.

Thus we have learned in the light of the New Testament, that Leviticus is not without its meaning, its object, and its mission. It is full of Christ. Its harmony and its glory are in Him. Many a humble Israelite learned from Levi what we learn more easily from Matthew, and John, and Paul—the way to heaven. Its dim lights disclosed the everlasting rest—the price of it, and the precious blood by which its heirs have been redeemed. The Jews lived in the grey and misty dawn,—we in noon-day. But the same

sun gives the morning twilight, who pours down the effulgence of noon. Ours is greater privilege. It is, therefore, greater responsibility. O Eternal and Blessed Spirit, who spake by the prophets, teach us, seal us, sanctify us !




## CHAPTER XI.

### LAST APPEAL.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

JOHN v. 40.

I STATED, in the course of my explanatory remarks on the instructive chapters of Leviticus I have read—for they are instructive in more than one great feature of the Christian economy—that the leprosy, there so graphically described, was, if left to itself, a fatal disease. It brought death to him who was its victim, unless means were interposed to neutralize its influence, and to arrest its effects. The fact is, all disease is more or less connected with death: it is supposed, by those most competent to pronounce on the subject, that there is no such fact on earth as perfect health; that the instant we are born, the curse, pronounced in Paradise, has its response in every nerve and member of our physical economy, and we begin, having eaten thereof, immediately to die. I stated, however, that all disease is evidence of sin. If there had been no sin to infect the world with its poison, and to project its dark and baneful shadow over an orb that once was beautiful and fair, there had been no aches, and ills, and sickness; and old age, and decay, and death. One disease, however, is singled out from the rest, and made the



great characteristic type of that inner universal disease, of which all outer maladies are the sad and sorrowing progeny. The great typical disease was that spoken of in the chapter, and it is the type of sin in the heart, the inner disease of all humanity. Now we were told, that, unless God himself cured the leper, there was no cure for him ; that, therefore, his going to the priest was to ascertain, Have I that disease or not ? If he had it not, he needed not to seek a cure ; but if the priest pronounced, from certain symptoms, that it was that disease, then it was the duty of the leper to detach himself from society, to go to God, the Great Healer, and to ask the cure of his disease from him. We do not need a Jewish priest, or any other priest, to tell us, that the great inward malady is in us all ; that sin has entered, circulates its poison through every vein, irritates every faculty of the soul and every affection of the heart with its poison ; and that unless we are healed by Him, pardoned by Him, our sins removed by Him who alone has power, and is willing to pronounce judicial absolution, we never can be healed, or pardoned, or forgiven at all. Hence, the grand prescription, applicable to all in this assembly, like a leaf that has fallen from the tree of life, legible also to all, is, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Come unto Him, the Physician that heals, the Sacrifice that atones, the Prophet that teacheth, and you will have everlasting life. And then the complaint that he is constrained to utter is, " Ye, notwithstanding you are conscious of this poison in you ; ye, notwithstanding you feel this moral malady is upon you ; ye, the victims of a disease that must drag you to everlasting ruin if not

arrested, cured, and healed, be astonished, O heavens, and wonder, O earth; ye, the victims of such a malady, will not come unto me, that you may get that which you can get nowhere else—life, health, and happiness for ever.”

I have selected these words, then, after giving this introductory explanation of their connexion with the malady described in the chapter we have read, in order to meet, and, if possible, to obviate, difficulties, real or imaginary, felt by many in accepting the great prescription of the Gospel; namely, believe on Christ, come to him, rest upon him, and have everlasting life. Now, one of the most common excuses urged by persons to whom I address the solemn responsibilities under which they live, is that you admit yourself that the regeneration of the heart is an act of sovereignty. You admit yourself that man cannot turn, or convert, or change himself. How, then, can we believe in Christ, unless we get Divine power? And does not the impossibility of doing so suggest to us the duty of waiting till Christ is pleased to change the heart, and to enable us to believe in his holy name? Now, I admit at once, you cannot. But then I must distinguish. There are two *cannots*: there is the *cannot* which is, physically and strictly, “I cannot;” and there is a *cannot* which, translated into honest language, and as it sounds in the presence of the Almighty, is, “I will not.” The question, therefore, is, whether your “cannot” is “will not”—physical or moral inability? That there are two such inabilityies is obvious from the language that we use. We say, “An honest man *cannot* steal.” Why? Because he will not. We say, “A thief cannot steal.” Why? Because he can get

nothing to lay his hand upon. The one, therefore, cannot steal, because he is utterly indisposed to dishonesty; the other cannot steal, because he cannot get anything to lay his hand upon. So we say again, "The poor cannot give money at a collection," because they have none to give. We also say, "A miser cannot give," simply because, though he has plenty to give, he has not a heart to give. We see, therefore, a broad distinction between *cannot*, the result of physical inability, and *cannot*, as a mere "will not," or being willing to do so.

When I bid you believe on Christ, or, in the common language of Scripture, come to Christ—your answer is, "I cannot." Do you mean, then, that you have no capacity for salvation, or do you mean that you have no inclination to accept of salvation? I answer at once, If you have no capacity for salvation—if you are utterly incapable of accepting the Gospel—then you have a most excellent and valid excuse, and there will be no punishment. If it really be a valid excuse, good, sincere, real, that you are incapable of being a Christian, you will never be condemned for not being a Christian. For instance, when a lunatic speaks profane language we do not think of blaming him, because he has lost the balance of his mental powers, or those mental powers are so disordered by disease, or the physical disorganization of them, that he is unable to regulate his own conduct, or to do that which is right. Duty always falls before a valid excuse. But is your excuse of this sort? Is your "I cannot" of this sort? Are you sure it does not imply, or conceal almost from yourself, the latent, *but criminal* resolution, "I will not believe, because

there is something that I love better than the service of God, the salvation of the soul, the hopes of glory?" Now, if it be the latter, if it really be the latter, that you will not, it is no excuse whatever. For a man to plead that he cannot do what God bids him, because he so loves sin, is outrageously absurd; it is to make sin an excuse for sinning, and to plead one crime as an apology for perpetrating another. But if your excuse be of the first sort that I have alluded to—namely, that you cannot, physically cannot, that is a very different excuse. I ask you, Why have you come to this conclusion? I press you closer, and I ask you, Why have you come to the conclusion that you cannot physically, mentally believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, come unto him, and be saved by him? If you say—and you say so far very justly—that we are all fallen creatures; that we suffer by Adam's sin; the taint of it, and disorganization of it, has overtaken us, and we are all conscious of it, and therefore we cannot believe; if you say so, I ask, Is your will extinguished with the rest of your mental and your material economy? Do you find it as matter of fact that Adam's sin has taken away your will? Do you never choose what you love in this world, and reject what you hate? Is not this proof of a will? Are you not, on the contrary, perfectly conscious that you do choose to do this thing, and you do choose not to do that thing? And if you choose to sin, it would be absurd to say that Adam's sin is to bear the blame, and that you, sinning from your own deliberate choice, are to be regarded as innocents on earth, and to be exculpated at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Let us therefore look at the whole of these objections, and see, if we possibly can, where the difficulty lies. Why is it that man will not come to Christ, or, translated into popular language, why is it that men will not become Christians; why is it that they will not take the way to heaven, and be holy and happy for ever and ever? I answer first, The difficulty is not on the part of God. You cannot say that God is opposed to your coming to heaven. You cannot show me a brand that he has affixed upon you. You are not conscious of weights that he has hung to your soul, that drag you necessarily downwards to the depths of perdition. You can see no obstruction that his hand has planted; you can hear no fiat that his lips pronounce. On the contrary, every page of his holy word leads you to believe that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.

In the second place, the difficulty cannot lie in Christ's atonement being insufficient. You cannot say his blood cleanseth from some sins, but not from all sin. You cannot say he is able to save a few, but that he is not able to save all that come to him, seeing that "he ever liveth to make intercession for them." His sacrifice is of infinite efficacy; and if there were millions of worlds that needed to share in its efficacy—when millions had been saved through it, its virtue would be inexhaustible still. You cannot, therefore, say that his righteousness is not enough to cover you, that his blood is not enough to cleanse you, that his death is not a sacrifice sufficient for you. You cannot, in the next place, say that Christ is unwilling to redeem you. Open the New Testament: what does

he say ? "Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden." What is his complaint ? "Ye will not come unto me." What is his invitation ? "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

You cannot urge, in the next place, that the Holy Spirit of God is unwilling. He strove with the antediluvians, he strives with us. He inspired apostles to preach, evangelists to record the glad tidings that we now hear. And, therefore, whether I look to what God the Father has done, or to what Christ is doing, or to what the Holy Spirit has to do, I am constrained to conclude, that the obstruction, whatever that obstruction may be, is not upon the part of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But is it, in the next place, in God's own word ? Is the Bible so dim a lantern that it cannot light you on your way to heaven ? Does it disclose the road that leads you to the Lamb so imperfectly that you stumble at every footstep ? The very reverse is the fact. All the clouds of Scripture float in the upper realms, to which no human wing can soar ; but all the sunshine of Scripture, with scarcely a cloud or a shadow upon it, is upon the lower levels, which it is our duty and privilege to tread. There are mysteries in the Sacred Volume so impenetrable that no genius has pierced them at any time ; but the great truths that relate to our salvation are so plain, that critics may err, scholars may stumble, but the wayfaring man will not err when he looks into them.

Will you say that the obstruction to heaven and to happiness is in the greatness of your sins ? That is no obstruction at all ; because the answer to that is, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." No man that hears the Gospel will be lost because of his sins ; the condemning sin will be that he rejected the remedy for them. The heathen may be judged by a law that they have broken, but they that hear the Gospel will be judged by their reception or rejection of the remedy provided. Now, your sins are not an obstruction to heaven : Christ's blood will wash them all away ; the Holy Spirit can give you grace to repent of and to renounce them. Well, then, what is your reason—what is your excuse ? Do you answer, " We have not power to know God, to love God, to believe on the Saviour, and to accept heaven ?" I ask, " Have you not understandings that can distinguish a sovereign from a shilling, a good shilling from a bad one ? Have you not hearts and affections that can love many things, and hate many things ? Have you not a conscience that still feels, and responds to a sense of responsibility ? Then what is the reason ? Is it, again I ask, want of capacity ? Are you utterly incapable of being made Christians ? If you have the incapacity which I have referred to, then the Gospel is no more addressed to you than it is to trees and stones, to the fishes of the deep, and to the cattle on the hills ; because you are incapable, you say, of being benefited by its grand provision. And if this be true, then God will punish with eternal misery infinite multitudes for not doing what they have no capacity to do ; and his tyranny will be as great as that of the Babylonian despot who punished with death the wise men that could not declare the dream that he himself had forgotten ; and the slothful servant that brought his talent in a



napkin unused, because he believed his master to be a hard man, reaping where he had not sowed, instead of being worthy of that retribution wherewith his conduct was visited, acted justly, honestly, and conscientiously. If God punishes for incapacity, then there is no such thing as mercy; for mercy is deliverance from deserved punishment. But your punishment would not be deserved, and therefore mercy could not be exercised. And yet the law does not seem to show that it is want of capacity; for what is its demand? Nothing more reasonable. It does not say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with an angel's fervour or with an archangel's force;" but, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Now, I ask anyone in this assembly, Are you conscious, not that you have loved God as you thought his law demanded, but have you really loved him as much as you could? No one in this assembly can say, "I have loved God as much as I could;" but, "I know that I have neither loved God nor my neighbour as much as I could."

But what an idea would this give of the Gospel! If man is utterly incapable of believing in the truths of the Gospel, of embracing the only Saviour of the guilty, and accepting that which is the way to heaven, and becoming a new creature by the influence of transforming grace, then God's justice enacts the penalty of eternal death on man who cannot do what God has commanded him to do; and when he saw this to be the case, rather than that all humanity should perish he gave his Son a sacrifice, to rescue us from an unjust, an undeserved, and an iniquitous punishment. And when he has done so, he offers us salvation on terms of

which we are incapable,—namely, repentance and faith; and threatens us with everlasting wrath for not doing what we are incapable of doing—believing in his testimony, and resting on his precious sacrifice, and entering into heaven through his blood, and through his merits. Now this would not be the good news; this would not be a Gospel to us, but the very opposite to the Gospel. But when we open those parts of the Bible that allude to the triumphs, and the spread of this Gospel, we find very different portraits of it. For instance, it is stated by one apostle, that “not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” of God; “but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” And our Lord says,—“I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” And do you not find it fact that a peasant becomes a Christian, and a philosopher remains a sceptic? Do you not see many a man with a very humble mind become a true believer, and many a man with a very powerful intellect remain in atheistic infidelity? What is the reason of this? The reason is obvious;—that if there be capacity in the humblest intellect there surely must be capacity in the highest; and that if the weakest mind can believe and receive the truth, and rejoice in it, the most powerful intellect may not and dare not plead, “I am not a Christian, because I could not be so;” and at the judgment-seat none shall be able to say, “I am not saved, because I could not be saved.” Every intimation about the judgment-seat leads us to conclude the opposite; that the lost are

sunk to the depths of woe, just because they would not be saved, and that if any perish, they perish not because they cannot help their destiny or avert their doom, but because they loved sin more than its correlative; they loved the way of the scoffers more than the way of the sons of God; and every man in this assembly is perfectly conscious that the evil that he does is his own free, deliberate choice, and that the reason he is not a Christian is that he is shuffling with God, that he is trifling with his conscience, and that he will not entertain the question like an honest man, and look responsibility in the face; and whenever the thought lives in his reason, and his responsibility comes near to his conscience, he goes to painting, to poetry, to music, to the world, to politics, to literature, to any or to every resource, in order to stave off the evil day, and then he follows up all with that most soothing opiate, "When I have a convenient season, I will take the whole subject into my serious consideration." You know that this is your own portrait; you know that if you sketched it yourself you could not do it more exactly. The whole difficulty lies in the inclination. "Ye will not come to me." "Why will ye die?" "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings!" and his answer is, "Ye will not." Your "I cannot be a Christian," translated into intelligible language, is, "I will not be a Christian." If you ask, Then what does the Holy Spirit do; do you disregard, or *ignore* the great work of the Spirit of God? I answer, Certainly not. No man ever entered into heaven who was not transformed and regenerated by God's Holy Spirit. But what does the Holy Spirit do? He does not

destroy one man in order to construct another upon his ruins. As in the resurrection of the body, it is the same body that rises again, so in the religion of the soul, it is not another soul, another memory, another conscience, another imagination; but it is the inspiration, the conversion, the expansion, the enlargement, the transformation, of all the faculties of the soul. The Spirit's great work is to make us willing. And what is the evidence of it? "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." He convinces of sin, he brings all things to your remembrance, he works within you to will and to do of his good pleasure. But do you say, "My heart is so depraved, so wicked, that I cannot believe?" That is, simply translated into plainer language, "I am so bad that I do not desire to get better." The very wish to be a Christian is the first sound of that footfall that precedes your acceptance of the truth. The very desire to have a new heart, is the inspiration of God, that will unfold itself in the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me."

One refuge to which man retreats very often, is that he is a free agent. "I can repent, believe, and be a Christian when I like." The precedent for that is the precedent of one whose history and life do not give much encouragement to imitation. Felix said, "When I have a convenient season, I will send for thee." That convenient season never arrived. And when man is driven out of that refuge, he will then say, "Man can do nothing; I had better therefore remain, rest on my oars till God is pleased to change *my heart*." Hell is paved with good intentions; re-

member, duty is in the present, never in the future. God's command should have from you not an echo, but an answer; and that answer not to-morrow, but to-day; and he that puts off the duty that devolves upon him to-day till to-morrow, merely more courteously, but not less truly, says to God, "I will not obey thee."

And in the next place, when you say that "God must change the heart, therefore I need not do anything," I answer, God is a God of means. I admit he can work with means, or without means, or against means; but his great law is, that he works by means. If you say that you cannot change your heart, is there nothing that you can do? When you try to open the Bible, does anything shut it in spite of you? When you try to read the Bible, do your eyes instinctively close, and does the type convey no meaning? When you come to the house of God, does anyone snatch you away? When you listen to a sermon, does any thought come into your mind that you cannot quench by the volition to do so? Does any anxiety come in there that you cannot expel if you will only make the attempt to do so? Can you not pray? Can you not read books that will instruct you in the way to heaven? You know you can. When you have exhausted all that is within your own reach, and then feel that you are no nearer heaven than when first you began to inquire, it will be time enough to say, "I believe I am a hopeless reprobate, and that there is no possibility of being saved; and therefore I give up all for lost." But think one moment what is the drift of all I have been saying. All this seems to me almost a reproach upon the Gospel, and an insult to you. Why, what are the

difficulties I am combating? They must surely be imaginary. If the Gospel be indeed a penance, painful and laborious, that its recipient must endure; if this Gospel be a nauseous drug that you must take three, four, six, eight times a-day during all the remainder of your life hereafter,—then I might spend the force of argument, and endeavour by eloquent appeal to try to induce you to commence to take this nauseous drug. But surely, good news among men, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, forgiveness for the greatest sin, welcome for the greatest sinner, regeneration for the hardest heart, and salvation for the oldest criminal that hears the Gospel, are joyous—oh! surely, it is an insult to your good sense to urge you to lay aside excuses for rejecting your happiness, for refusing to be happy, the sick for not going to a physician, the dying for not having life, the lost for not being found! One wonders that anyone hearing a Gospel that would electrify the lost, can for one moment need a persuasive to believe, to rejoice in, and be happy. Let me ask you again, what is this Gospel? Do you desire to see God in the aspect of a Father? Do you desire to see Him that made you, your Legislator and your King, not preparing punishment for his returning prodigal, but looking out if he can see the first sign of his shadow, or hear the first footfall of his approach, and the instant that he hears or sees one poor sinner running from his ruin, and seeking forgiveness and acceptance in the bosom of God, giving signal to all the choirs of the sky, who sing for joy, “One lost sheep is found—another dead one is alive—another poor prodigal has come to his home.” Or

do you desire to find the way to everlasting life, the way to everlasting joy? Where can you find it but in this blessed Gospel? Ask nature, and in all her oracles she is dumb; try it by Mount Sinai, and you may as well climb to the fixed stars as climb by it to heaven. The door of innocence is shut, the door of the law is impassable; but here announced upon the banks of the Jordan, and upon the streets of Jerusalem, a sound more musical than ever fell upon the listening ear of mankind, "I am the way; no man cometh to the Father but by me." Do you need a persuasive, do you need argument, and eloquent appeal to urge you to enter upon that way, to lay hold upon this Blessed Saviour, and to give utterance to the deepest feelings of your heart, "Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Or again, do you desire to have the forgiveness of your sins? Do you wish to know the only possibility of that—how shall sin be forgiven, how shall mine iniquities be pardoned? Ask any religion you like, and it can give you no answer. Ask the deist, and he hopes that you may obtain forgiveness, but he cannot assure you. Ask the unitarian, and he thinks God will be merciful, he hopes there will be mercy. God says he will forgive; but how he can be just and yet justify, he knows not. But ask the Bible, ask the evangelist, ask the Holy Spirit who inspired that evangelist to record that testimony; and he will tell you that in Christ God is just, whilst he justifies the very chiefest and worst of sinners. What a magnificent truth is that! Not, God is *merciful* to forgive us; we can easily understand that; but what a truth—

"God is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins!" Such a statement is that of an inspired evangelist, or it is the wild hallucination of a lunatic. It can be nothing between the two. But "we know in whom we have believed." In Christ we have remission and forgiveness of sins. If then you are conscious you are sinners, and there is no one in this assembly that does not feel that; if you know that sin is misery on earth, and misery hereafter, when things seen and palpable have passed away; if you know the wages of sin is death; if you believe what the Bible tells you, that you are shut up in the prison of condemnation by nature, criminals, without God and without hope,—then, if freedom to the captive and health to the diseased need no urging; if food to the hungry needs not the accompaniment of persuasion to make him eat it, how is it possible that this good news, the chiefest Saviour for the chiefest sinner, needs arguing, persuasion, remonstrance, reasoning? One would think the difficulty would be to prevent all humanity rushing with lightning speed to the bosom of God, and having instant peace, and pardon, and acceptance. Oh! shall the fishermen forsake their nets, and the publican his receipt of custom, and royal ones their thrones, and philosophers their studies, and come and worship the Infant Jesus; and shall we go one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and another to his home, and all say, "We will send for him at a more convenient season?" My dear friends, the guilt that will ruin thousands is not that they have broken God's law, but that they have heard such a Gospel as this, and utterly despised it. And let me remind you



of that awful truth—I think the most awful in the New Testament—that rejecting is not such a sin as neglecting. I can respect the infidel who says, “I have examined the Bible”—he may have examined it very imperfectly—“and the conclusion I come to is, that the Bible is not true.” I can respect that man—he is most honest, he is most candid—whilst I bitterly deplore his misfortune. But when a man hears the Gospel, and puts down his own conclusions on what he has heard, and lives in contemptuous neglect, I can understand the force of that awful exclamation of an apostle, “How shall we escape;” not if we *reject*—that is bad enough—but “how shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?”

Now, I ask you, Have you ever spent as much time upon the investigation of the way to heaven, of the truth of Christianity, as you have spent in reading some ancient history, or deciphering some curious manuscript, or ascertaining the medical properties of a plant, or analyzing the crystals of a mineral? Are there not thousands upon thousands who, if they would only honestly and impartially reflect, would see that no time is regarded by them as too great to be expended upon scientific matters, and that minutes are thought to be most unworthy sacrifices when expended upon ascertaining if this be God’s Book, and if they be walking in the way that leads to heaven. Why, how can we answer for these things—how can we excuse ourselves at the judgment-seat? If this Bible be true, often has the infidel said, there are not half a dozen believers in it; if this Bible be false, it is not to be received with any intermediate treatment. I cannot accept Christianity as a piece of state policy; I

cannot accept the minister of the Gospel as one merely to keep the common people in order. I regard religion as the great instructress of the soul, the way to God, to heaven, and to happiness; and, if this book be not that, then it is the most awful blasphemy: it cannot be burned too soon. And what we are called upon to come to, is to one or other of these conclusions;—either put the book into the fire, speak manfully, say, “I do not believe in God, or in heaven, or in hell, or in the immortality of the soul.” I can understand that—that is most consistent; but anything between that, and vital, living, evangelical, thorough Protestant Christianity, I know not. There are but two grand consistencies in the world;—the man that musters hardihood to live, as live he may, in the freezing vacuum in which the soul cannot breathe and wing cannot soar, called Atheism, or the man that lives in the happy, the holy, the blessed hope, that God is his God, eternity his life hereafter, infinitude his home. There is nothing consistent between. Socinianism is a huge inconsistency, Tractarianism is a huge inconsistency, Deism is a huge inconsistency. Atheism is a consistency—the consistency of the polar iceberg it may be, but it is consistency—living Christianity is also a consistency; and between these two there is not a resting-place for the soles of your feet.

Or, on the other hand, do you desire your hearts to be renewed by God’s Holy Spirit,—do you wish to be made fit for heaven? Jesus appeals to you, and he says, “If ye, fathers and mothers, with all your faults, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the

Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?" One would think it would need no reasoning to make you pray, "O God, give me thy Holy Spirit." Or, do you desire to join, in the better land, the groups of them that have preceded you? Do you desire to mingle with cherubim and seraphim, and those that worship God in the upper sanctuary? How did they get there? There is not a soul in heaven that did not get there by one only process. One asks, "Who are these that I see in heaven clothed in white robes—who are they?" The answer is, "These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night without ceasing." Now you can get there by the same process. There is but one word that is the password of heaven and earth; there is but one way that leads to glory, to honour, and to immortality,—and that is, Christ. It is his precious blood, it is trust in God's love manifested to us in and through Christ the Mediator, and applied to us by his holy and his blessed Spirit. You are in a world of trial. I speak to men of every section, sphere, and class, in our social superstructure; I speak to those that have aches, and ills, and cares, and bitter recollections; and, worse than bitter recollections, foreboding fears, and sorrows, and trials, the dim presentiments of which are all that they feel now. In such a world we need not only guidance, but comfort. Where will you go amidst the accumulating weaknesses of age, amidst the darkening of lights that once made your home all brightness; and the exhaustion of a fire that once made it all cheerful—where will you go for comfort? All the

cisterns of this world are broken cisterns. I cannot conceive how a man can have one moment's happiness or peace who lives to fifty, sixty, seventy, and sees son, daughter, brothers and sisters, and fathers and mothers, and friends, all swelling the dim procession to the grave, and knows not Christ. Where can that man's happiness be? If there be no meeting-place, no blessed reunion, no repairing of shattered groups, no completing of broken circles, no hope beyond the grave, no light of glory upon the pale face of the dead, then of all men we are most miserable, and a dog's life is better than that of a human being. But we need consolation, and, blessed be God! we know where it is to be found. And if, my dear friends, I bring you to that hour which comes to all, and that must also come to you, I ask, what then will be your comfort? You may depend upon it, when you lie down upon the last bed, and the quivering pulse gives evidence of the approaching severance, all the honours that could be snowed down from royal thrones, all the riches that could be piled around you in the largest coffers, you have no idea how poor, worthless, miserable, unsatisfactory they will seem to you in that hour, and during that agony: they can tell you best who have gone through it. Those things that you are now clutching at, those treasures you are now striving after, on a dying bed will be to you as wretched clay, and worthless, even more worthless than that. But if, on a dying bed, you know that the sun of your life, that sets in the darkening west, will rise, beautiful and glorious, in the everlasting east; if you feel that your death is but the officiating minister *parting* from the shattered temple in which it has

done service so long, and singing, as he emerges from the ruin, his happy and his blessed "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;" if you feel, as the Gospel teaches, that the day of your death is only your coming of age, and that your last breath makes you free of a glorious universe, what comfort, what peace! If this be true, what a glorious religion is the Gospel! If this book be true, and if what I am now stating be its fair, as it is its fair and impartial interpretation, then to a Christian there is no dying. I need not tell you that there is no such thing as universal night. When it is night upon this hemisphere, or on this side of the globe, it is bright daylight upon the other hemisphere. And there is no such thing as death. Your emergence from the shadows of time, the hemisphere of earth, is only your crossing the line, and entrance into the bright sunshine that lies perpetually upon the opposite side. There is no such thing as extinction or annihilation to a Christian. We think so; and, as I have often said to you, we dislike to die; and quite right. It is an instinct of my nature to live; and I believe the wish to die is a sinful wish—it is a suicidal wish. Our wish should be to live for ever; I have often said, we were never made nor meant to die. Sin has done that. But when I can look at death in the light of Christianity, I can see that just as my body is undergoing complete dissolution every seven years, and new particles taking the place of the old, so the grave will be but the last of its changes, and its last change will be there under Christ's presidency. How beautiful is the phrase, a *cemetery*, literally a sleeping-place!—the body calmly waiting for the resurrection

hour, whilst the soul, the man, myself, that which thinks, feels, lives, and loves, is ministering before the throne of God and of the Lamb for ever !

If this Gospel do contain such truths as these, must I urge them upon you, my dear friends ? In the depths of his conscience every one in this assembly knows—and there is my strength,—that I am perfectly right. You do not need argument—your own hearts, your own consciences, are my witnesses ; and between these truths and the conscience of man there is that perfect harmony which makes the inference irresistible, that the God who made my conscience, inspired this Gospel ; and I speak to you words of soberness and truth when I bid you believe on Him, and remind you that there is no excuse that will stand a moment's investigation for not believing on Jesus, and so having life everlasting.

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